



PAINTING WITH A COMET'S TAIL

The Touch of the Landscape Architect
on the Blue Ridge Parkway

Harley E. Jolley

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*The touch of the landscape
architect on the
Blue Ridge Parkway*

*by
Harley Volley*



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Blue Ridge Parkway

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The Appalachian Consortium was a non-profit educational organization composed of institutions and agencies located in Southern Appalachia. From 1973 to 2004, its members published pioneering works in Appalachian studies documenting the history and cultural heritage of the region. The Appalachian Consortium Press was the first publisher devoted solely to the region and many of the works it published remain seminal in the field to this day.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a story of the forming of landscape. It is the tale of the making of one of man's greatest achievements in the 20th century. It is a story of boldly remaking the land but also it is an illustration of how man can fit delicately into the land with minimum impact.

The design and construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway is an illustration of the kind of quality possible in an enlightened democracy. It is the true example of how a society can properly care for its land and its people.

The actual design and construction is an illustration of quality which can result from inspired teamwork. Each person involved carried out his role with diligent commitment, from the man in charge of design to the craftsman working on the smallest detail.

Further, this linear environment is a prime illustration of the landscape architect's skills. It beautifully demonstrates this profession's goal of blending man's needs into nature's systems. The resultant experience clearly shows how man can enhance the beauty of nature and maximize its potentials with careful and artful planning.

The linear experience allows us to fully explore and understand a landscape. It is a quality example of how to restore the beauty of a land and yet allow thousands to move through the environment. The environment created is an example to be followed in how to manage an environment over time.

Hopefully, this story will be an inspiration to those who wish to create quality environments. This story should be required reading for all those who wish to learn how man can design quality landscapes.

Roger Martin
President, ASLA

To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

From the Act of August 25, 1916 establishing the Park Service.

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

Civilized man has been prone to conjure up a maxim or a saying to reflect the prevailing philosophy of the day. Two of those familiar favorites readily apply to the world famous Blue Ridge Parkway: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Even with these two maxims in mind it is extremely difficult today to properly appreciate the awesome mission given to those who pioneered the location, design, and landscaping of some five hundred miles of the nation's first rural national highway—along a route where magnificent, heavily forested mile-high mountains had been gashed by erosion, or exploited for commercial development.

Such, nevertheless, was the assignment and the challenge afforded a handful of young landscape architects in the early 1930's. Construction of a thing of beauty—a scenic parkway linking the Shenandoah and the Great Smoky Mountains National Parks—was one answer proposed that could give employment at the moment as well as create beauty for future travelers. To Stanley W. Abbott, the man who was to administer development of this piece of "managed American countryside," Parkway location posed a creative challenge, because, in his words, "You worked with a ten-

league canvas and a brush of a comet's tail."

Another maxim augured well for success. The ancient preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes centuries ago declared that "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven . . . a time to plant . . . a time to heal . . . a time to gather stones together. . ." (3:1). This observation was uniquely and richly fulfilled in development of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Parkway construction was fostered by seven events, which suddenly were fitted together like finely calibrated cogs in a complex machine.

First was the creation of the second and third National Parks located in the eastern United States: the Shenandoah in Virginia and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee, as a result of an Act of Congress in 1926 which authorized their establishment.

Second, the Great Depression provided a time of emergency and a season of obligation to provide relief for large numbers of unemployed in the mountain region. Solutions included two items essential to the Parkway story—the initial appropriation of \$4,000,000 to fund the Public works proposal on December 19, 1933, and the host of relief-funded laborers, in numbers suffi-

cient to have brought joy even to those monumental tasks undertaken by an Egyptian Pharaoh's slave driver!

Third, the Great Depression brought to power leaders who were both able and willing to experiment, to innovate, and to expedite Federal programs previously not politically acceptable, men like Harry F. Byrd, Theodore E. Straus, and Harold L. Ickes.

Fourth, the time and the season were right because nation-wide depression made available the talents of highly trained but temporarily idled engineers and landscape architects whose multiple skills could be turned to productive ends by assigning them to help plan the Parkway.

Fifth, because of the hard times, the political leaders of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia were sufficiently astute politically to appreciate the economic impact the national parkway would have upon their states, hence they were willing to offer their fullest cooperation.

Sixth, the recent construction of the "Skyline Drive" in the Shenandoah National Park and a series of parkways in New York had demonstrated the feasibility and utility of parkways.



Typical scene along route of the Parkway prior to its construction.

Finally, the recreational habits of the American motoring public had led to insistent demands for access to scenic highways uncluttered by commercial traffic.

For these reasons, then, the time and the season for the conception and construction of America's first rural national parkway were reaching fruition. Although there were no precedents for such a rural parkway there were certain precisely stated guidelines to which it must conform as stated in the Organic Act which officially established the National Park Service in 1916. All units in the system were obligated to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Assignment of the project to the National Park Service also had a "time and season" element because Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, had primary administrative responsibility for both the National Park Service and the Public Works Program which was to supply the construction force. This routine occurrence was of additional significance, because it forced the scenic highway and all of its environs to conform to the above stated National Park Service standards, rather than to the minimal requirements of an ordinary highway.

This cultural and environmental sensitivity had characterized National Park philosophy from its beginning, in Yellowstone National Park. The man who is credited with helping develop the first park roads, General Hiram M. Chittenden, also fathered the dictum which has ever since guided road construction in our national parks: "All park roads must lie lightly upon the land." So, in 1933, under the social and political pressures of the Great Depression, a road "lying lightly upon the land" was to prove to be one of the most unique and most enduring of curative projects undertaken among a variety of responses.

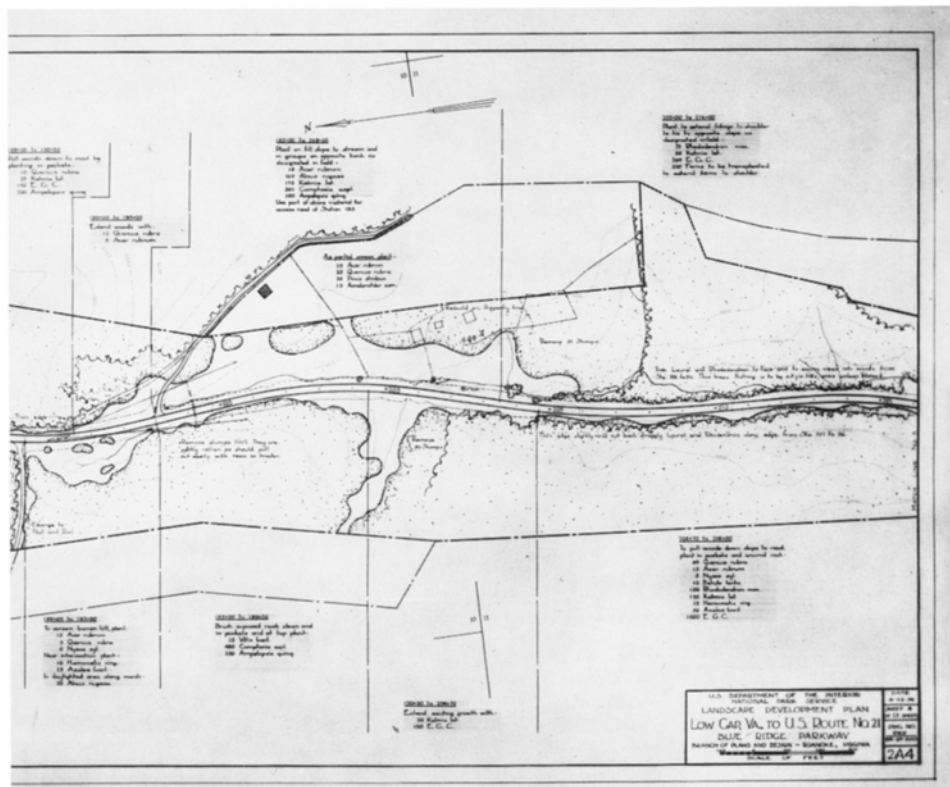
Historically, the proposal to construct a scenic highway linking the Shenandoah National Park with the

Great Smoky Mountain National Park first made newspaper headlines on September 23, 1933. The project, assigned to the National Park Service, received its initial allotment of \$4,000,000 in December, 1933, providing work for thousands of mountaineers who otherwise would have been left out of the relief programs. It also established a permanent scenic highway for promoting tourism and national recreation.

On December 26, 1933, Stanley W. Abbott reported for duty as Acting Superintendent and Resident Landscape Architect, a post he held for the next decade. It was his responsibility to supervise and administer one of the most spectacular landscape programs this nation has ever witnessed. Time and season were well met in this Cornell graduate, who came endowed with the multiple talents of a modern day Renaissance man. His artistic and literary skills were richly supplemented by a highly innovative and visionary mind. Coming to the Parkway assignment fresh from an apprenticeship with the New York Westchester County Parks program, he already knew the remarkable healing effect a wisely pursued landscape pro-

gram could achieve. Before chief planner Gilmore Clarke worked magic on it, the Bronx River area merited this description: "Its deeper reaches were cesspools, its shallower reaches spread into mosquitoey swamps. The banks presented quaint perspectives of rotting wagons, coal-yards, gray old shacks, and heaps of tin cans; a menace to health, a detriment to community prosperity and a sickening waste of potential beauty." In fact, a description of the Westchester County Parks system is strikingly fitting for the new scenic parkway created by Abbott: "Intelligence has been unsparingly employed throughout; but it was flexible, malleable intelligence, as intimately bound up with particular circumstances as a scheme for playing a bridge-hand."

This "malleable intelligence," aroused during the 1920's, helped change a repulsive eye-sore into a model park and parkway system with landscaped motor-ways, rough masonry bridges and overpasses, golf links, swimming pools, beaches, playgrounds, picnic sites, and amusement parks, finally integrated into a thing of beauty and high recreational value. As a result, much that is today considered dis-



Section of page from landscaping development master plan.

tinctly characteristic of the Blue Ridge Parkway had its genesis in the Westchester County program, where engineers and landscape architects had pioneered the principles of parkway construction. Instead of revamping old existing roadways they took new routes, closed them to commercial traffic, bought wide strips on both sides of the route to insulate it from undesirable development, cleaned up the river scene and adjacent countryside with sod and plantings, and incorporated controlled concession operations and parks throughout the system to eliminate shoddy hot-dog stands and other tourist traps. These accomplishments were fresh in Stanley W. Abbott's mind when he was assigned this task of creating a five hundred mile scenic highway out of land that had felt the ravages of misuse for many years.

The lack of pristine, park-like conditions along the route was vividly illustrated by one of Abbott's earliest reports: "Few of the show places of the parkway environs remain in an unspoiled natural state. The predominance of cut-over forests, cultivated farm land, and the commer-

cialization of the few protected scenic types have greatly reduced the recreation values. There is a total absence of natural lakes and the muddy condition of the streams and rivers in all seasons due to erosion has nullified the outstanding beauty of these water features. This general condition emphasizes the need for public purchase and restoration if this area is to regain its one time attractiveness."

"Public purchase and restoration" were key ingredients in the Parkway story. The states through which the route ran were obligated to purchase all necessary lands and donate them to the Federal government for necessary construction and scenic restoration.

Before this could be achieved, however, there came a mighty struggle to determine the general location of the Parkway. Original projection had proclaimed that Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee would share relatively equal portions of it, every mile involving precious construction and employment funds as well as continuing income from tourism. Thus, location of the route became highly politicized, with each state earnestly seeking maximum mileage, as demonstrated by the zealous pursuit of the route by North Carolina.

To help settle the squabble, Abbott and Gilmore D. Clarke were assigned the task of evaluating all possible routes and making recommendations. Both men came from

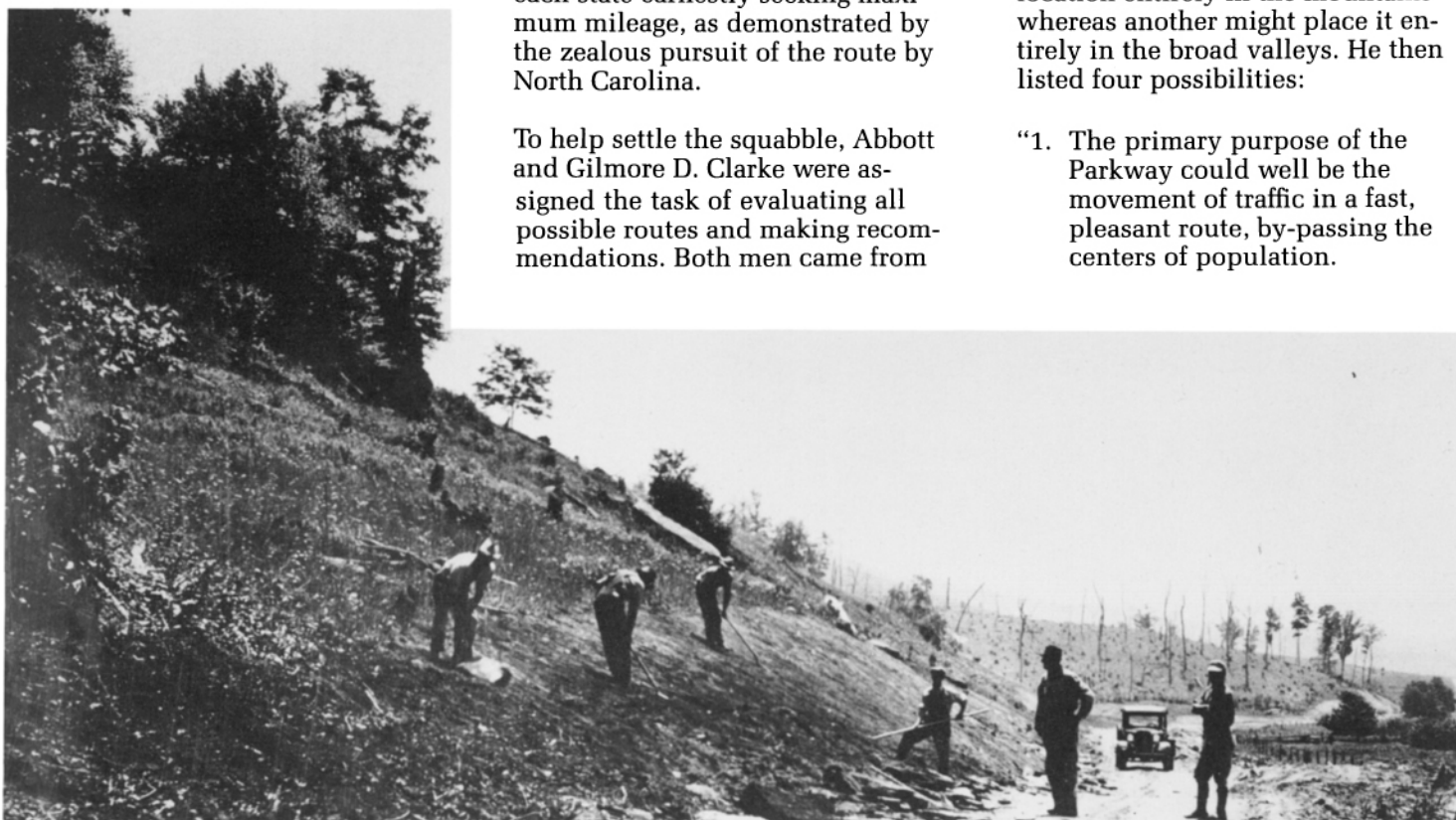
Westchester County Parks program, and Clarke had recommended Abbott for the new parkway position. Over a five month period, working very closely with Thomas C. Vint, Chief Architect of the National Park Service, they analyzed all proposed routes, then filed their findings and recommendations with the Director of the National Park Service on June 8, 1934.

Abbott's report provides an intriguing insight into his earliest thinking about the Parkway. In his opening statement he declared that several attitudes could be taken as to the primary purposes of the project, including:

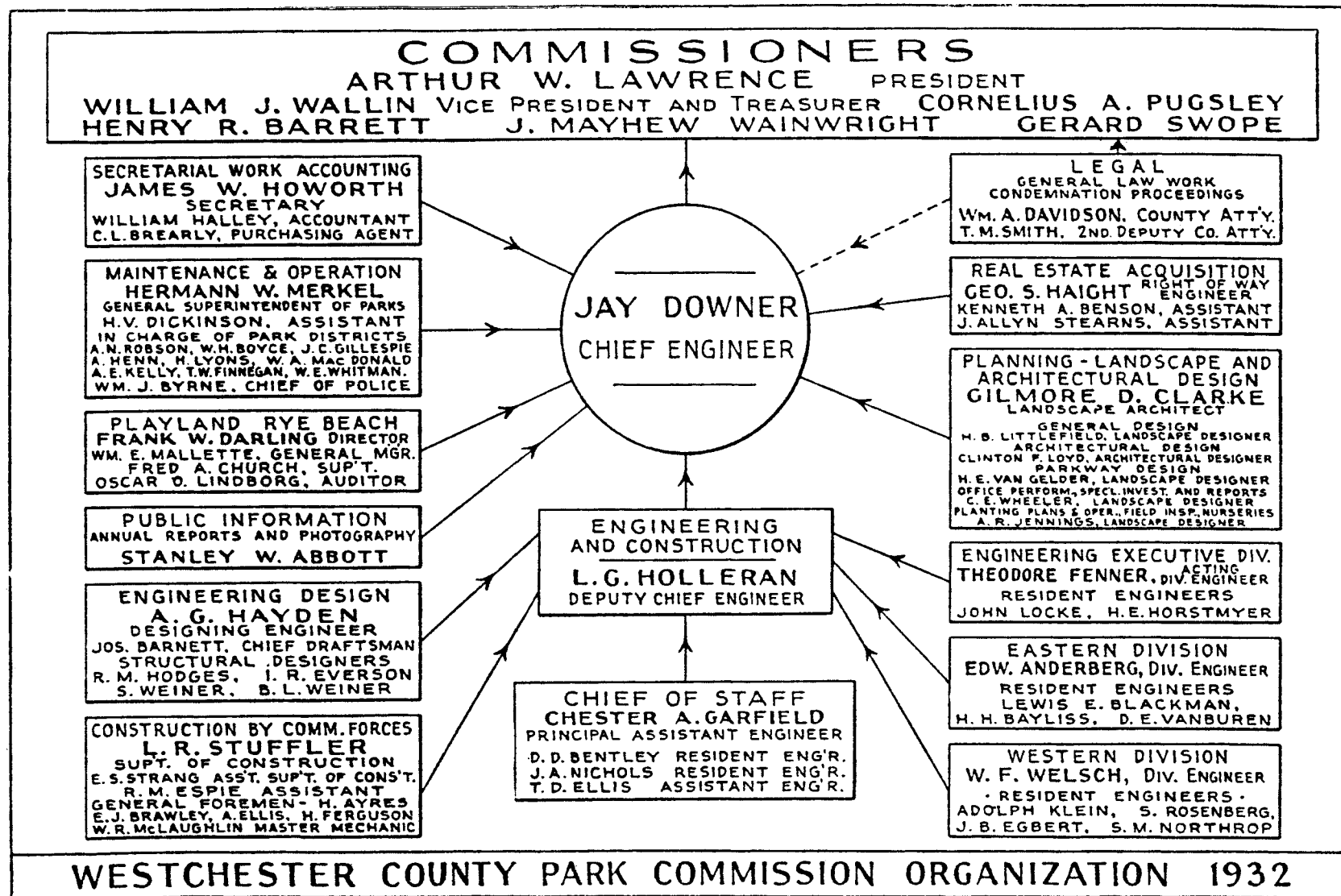
1. Movement of traffic between parks.
2. Scenic character of the roadside.
3. Recreational advantages enroute.
4. Economic influence.

While stressing that the relative importance of each of these factors would vitally affect the whole question of location, he also felt that one set of requirements might place the location entirely in the mountains whereas another might place it entirely in the broad valleys. He then listed four possibilities:

- "1. The primary purpose of the Parkway could well be the movement of traffic in a fast, pleasant route, by-passing the centers of population.



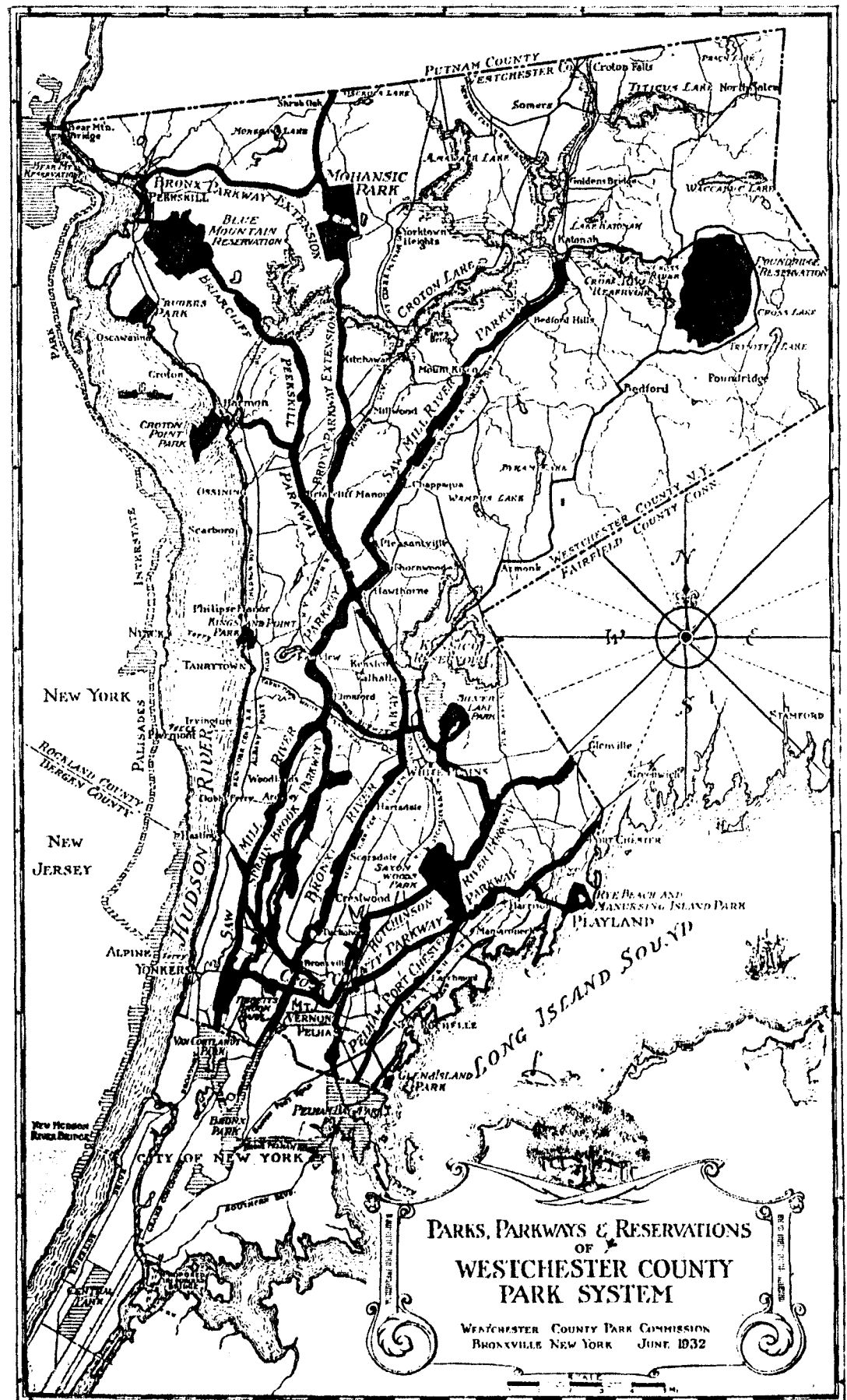
Laborers from Works Progress Administration and other depression era programs performed much of the hand work necessary to build and landscape the Parkway.

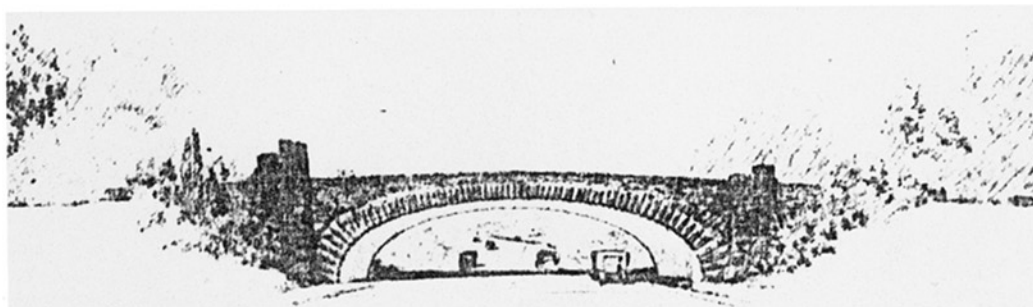


SYSTEM ON DESIGN OF BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

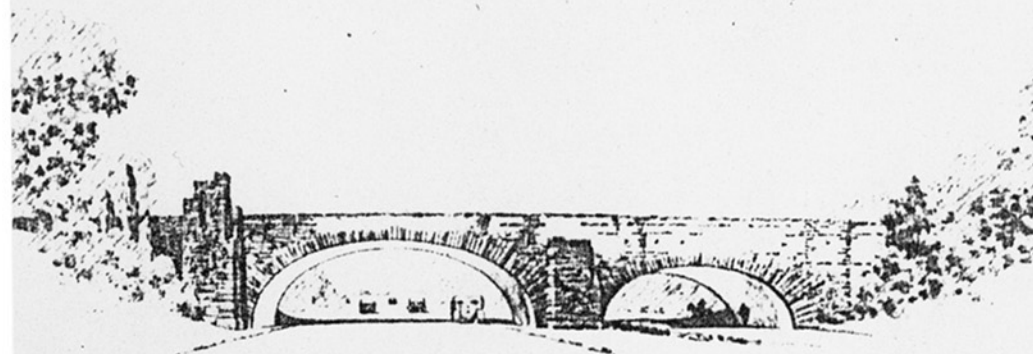
The Westchester County Park System (see map at right) greatly influenced the early design and the ultimate look of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Several names from the organization chart on the opposite page appear on similar charts for the Blue Ridge Parkway. Of particular note is the name Stanley W. Abbott, listed in the Public Information box. Though only a young man, he became the first Resident Landscape Architect and Acting Superintendent of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

When he accepted his duties as the Landscape Architect for the Parkway, he brought with him a willingness to experiment and expand on this new idea of a rural parkway.

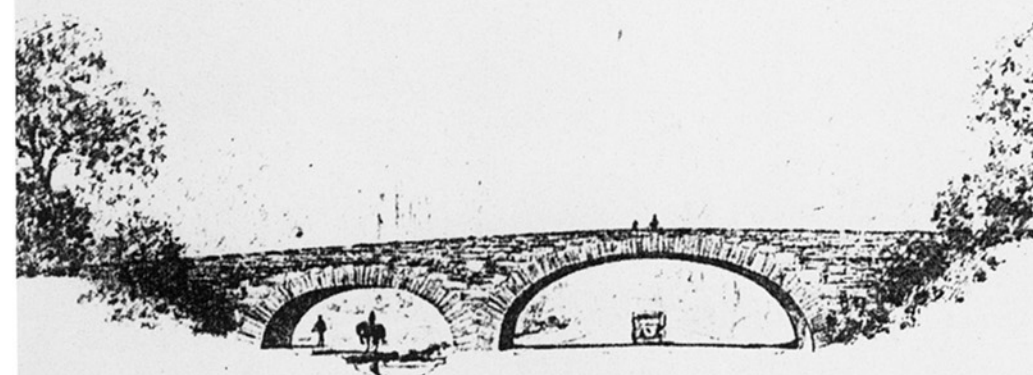




Bridge over parkway, West Street, White Plains-Harrison



Bridge over parkway, North Street, White Plains-Harrison



Bridge over parkway, Mill Road, New Rochelle
HUTCHINSON RIVER PARKWAY

Comparing the bridges of the Westchester County Parks System with those of the Blue Ridge Parkway demonstrates many similarities. In these two sets of drawings, the bridges for the Hutchinson River Parkway in Westchester County are on the left, and those for some Blue Ridge Parkway bridges are on the right.

The single arch bridges on the top of both pages resemble each other closely. The primary difference is in the profile of the top edges. The one on the right shows a smooth line from end to end. Compare it to the drawing at top left.

Different perspectives of the same bridges appear at the bottom of the pages, taken from opposite sides and at different times. Again, there are clear similarities in appearance in corresponding photographs. These photographs also portray clearly the effect of landscape architecture around the bridge approaches. The middle photograph was taken twenty years earlier than the one on the bottom, after the landscape architects had worked their magic.



Twin arch bridge at milepost 215.8, near Cumberland Knob, Va. Photograph taken early 1950's.



Twin arch bridge at milepost 215.8, near Cumberland Knob, Va. Photograph taken August 1974.



The route proposed by Stanley Abbott deliberately avoided the monotony of driving 500 miles of ridgeline. Instead it utilized slopes and valleys to contrast with the portions along the ridges.

2. If the Parkway were to be primarily a scenic route it would be desirable to connect and make available all the outstanding scenic areas within the region concerned.
3. If recreation were the dominant purpose, it would be desirable to locate the route near the areas of greatest recreational value.
4. The location of such a project might well be undertaken with a view of raising the economic value of a certain region."

Keeping in mind that it was, first of all, a park-to-park connector, he declared that the Parkway should be as "directional as possible consistent with its location in interesting territory." This was to insure that the traveler would have a sense of direction toward his destination, plus sensing that he was traveling on the shortest line between two parks. Abbott also emphasized that the Parkway would have to include not only a high standard of design but a variety of scenic, historical, and native interest features. To achieve this, he stated, "The location of the road, therefore, in combined woodlands, over rolling hills, along small creeks, in the broader river valley, as well as in varied relationship to the mountains is desirable. . . . Similarly, it will be helpful to introduce historical features and occasional pictures of the native country life."

Based upon these criteria, he and his colleagues offered their recommendation that "the Virginia-North Carolina-Tennessee route, which would begin at Shenandoah Park, pass by the Peaks of Otter, the Pinnacles of Dan, Grandfather Mountain, cross to the Unakas and on to the Great Smokies, be selected." This was basically a mountain route utilizing ridges, slopes, and valleys, which, Abbott emphasized, was not an actual skyline drive, but rather one which deliberately avoided a route that clung to the ridgeline the entire way on the premise that the traveler would soon become satiated with the skyline views. He contended that "a mountain or skyline road is distinctly a type to be developed within a park such as Shenandoah National Park and the idea is not adaptable in this region to a 500 mile park to park connection."

Nevertheless, he and Vint, recommended that careful consideration be given to a valley route before a final decision was made on the recommended mountain location. Such routing, they pointed out, would be more direct, less expensive, have better alignment, could better serve through passenger traffic, and could provide easy access to scenic attractions along the way. One of their strong arguments in favor of the valley route was the fear that there would not be sufficient traffic on the mountain parkway to justify the expense of construction. They, of course, had no way of knowing that half a century later some twenty

million visitors annually would derive enjoyment from that mountain parkway!

While developing his routing recommendations, Abbott had discovered a major difference between his park-to-park project and the Westchester County park system: politicians would openly intervene and wield masterful influences upon the former whereas the Westchester program had been remarkably free from political interference. In fact, both of Abbott's recommendations—the valley route and a Virginia-North Carolina-Tennessee route—were quickly disregarded because of political influences so powerful that they reached all the way to the White House. After much debate, lobbying, and political infighting, the proposed parkway was routed, by decree of Secretary Ickes, solely through Virginia and North Carolina, leaving Tennessee with zero mileage and much resentment. Thus, Abbott began his program with a strike-out, though no fault of his, and it was not to be the last time that his recommendation would be ignored in favor of another because of political intervention.

On the positive side, the five months Abbott spent in exploring and analyzing the potentially acceptable routes thoroughly familiarized him with the climate, geography, topography, natural history, and cultural atmosphere of his new domain. He was greatly impressed by the changing topography, the mountains "becoming larger and steeper," the sharp escarpments and broad plateaus, and with what he called the "heroic" mountains at the south end of the Parkway. The variety and magnitude of developmental possibilities exhilarated his landscape oriented mind, moving him to declare that he couldn't "imagine a more creative job than locating the Blue Ridge Parkway because you worked with a ten-league canvas and brush of a comet's tail." He also became convinced that he had embarked upon a mission entirely new to the National Park Service, a novel sort of conservation program in which he was to develop, in his words, "a museum of managed American countryside."

Of all aspects in the Blue Ridge Parkway's development Abbott's concept of "managed American countryside" was to indelibly brand every mile of the Parkway. Keenly aware that the only similarity between the five hundred miles under his charge and the other national park units, such as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon National Parks, was that they both were administered by the Department of the Interior, he also knew that by act of Congress, areas accepted and established as national parks had to possess sufficient natural beauty and environmental uniqueness to merit inclusion as a "national jewel." He was well aware, too, that the acreage which finally became the Blue Ridge Parkway, if judged solely on natural beauty and uniqueness, would never have qualified for national park status. Only the economic emergency of the Great Depression brought those acres under the guardianship of the National Park Service. Of equal significance was his concept of a managed countryside, which led to conversion of five hundred miles of ordinary countryside into a thing of eye-catching beauty. To achieve this feat he had to prescribe landscape development programs which must have brought furrowed brows to the old time National Park Service administrators, who would never have dreamed of, nor tolerated, timber-stand improvement, use of tons of seeds and fertilizers, agricultural leases, scenic easements, or massive soil improvement programs for their parks. Yet all of these and other landscape improvement practices became commonplace on the Parkway, resulting in a rural federal roadside most worthy of inclusion in the National Park system.

One of the charges under which the landscape architects operated was that of retaining the rural quality of the Parkway picture. This necessitated an all important study of the entire acreage to determine the most fruitful use of all lands within the park boundary. Out of the study evolved what the landscape architects called "PLUMS," meaning "Parkway Land Use Maps." Every section of the route was given detailed attention on the maps. Not only was the proposed landscape treatment entered thereon but so

were property lines, owners of adjoining lands, proposed land use, and similar data so essential to the architect and planner. The details required much research but Abbott provided it, feeling that prescribed land use was the key to Parkway distinctiveness.

Thus, as Abbott entered into the task of applying landscape magic to his novel undertaking, he was breaking new ground and daily pioneering. This he reflected in an early annual report: "Since its inception the Blue Ridge Parkway has been recognized by the Service as a pio-

neer project of a scale and character new to the National Park Service and new as well to the field of recreational planning. In the broadest phases of the work there has been little benefit of precedent. There has been an unusual need for thoughtful prediction of the manner in which, as well as to the extent to which, the facility will be used."

The notion of a "Federal Parkway" was not completely new when the Blue Ridge proposal was made in the fall of 1933. Official definition of the concept was developed by A.E. Demaray, Associate Director of the



Abbott proposed a "managed American countryside." He felt it was important to retain the rural flavor of the Parkway along this recreational drive.

landscape architects have to initially design subject to approval by Abbott's counterpart at BPR, William A. Austin, Resident Engineer, but they also had to cooperate with and coordinate the wishes and demands of politicians, highway commissions, and engineers representing the interests of the two states through which the Parkway construction was scheduled. The intricate and time-consuming tasks of reconnaissance, surveying, right-of-way acquisition, design and layout, drawing up specifications for contracts, putting out and evaluating bids, supervising construction, landscaping, and final acceptance of each completed contract required inordinate measures of coordination, patience, and forbearance. Every item considered, from the form a guard rail would possess to whether there should be swimming pools on the Parkway, had to routinely make the bureaucratic circle

from the field to Abbott, to the Regional Director, to the Director, and sometimes to the Secretary of the Interior, and then back down the line. Abbott, recalling this in 1943, said, "I often remember how one outsider said early in the days of the Parkway that the project would surely fall of its own weight. It has not fallen and perhaps that is the best witness to the Service's excellence in handling the situation."

Much credit for the "Service's excellence" centered in the tactful administrative skill of the Resident Landscape Architect. That his task was frequently an excruciating one is revealed in a confidential memorandum he filed with the Regional Director: "I doubt that in the whole history of federal public works there could be found an agency which has collaborated more wholeheartedly, more patiently, more selflessly, and more broad-mindedly

than the National Park Service. The effort has not been returned in kind." Even so, Abbott was aware that major failures of cooperation were, more often than not, due to inability of non-Park Service individuals to fully appreciate the unique distinction between a federal parkway and an ordinary public highway, whether they represented the Bureau of Public Roads or state officials. None of the available evidence indicates any malicious intent, no matter how severe were the differences in opinion.

For example, in determining the design of the Parkway around Roanoke, Virginia, the National Park Service designed that section to be built on the same standards and design as the rest of the Parkway. The Bureau of Public Roads, however, was adamant in supporting a four-lane route around Roanoke with the precise intent that eventu-

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY CONTRACTS														
PROJECT			CONTRACTOR			CONTRACT			CONTRACT			CONTRACT		
NO	DESCRIPTION	MILES	SIGNATURE	NO	DESCRIPTION	BID	LET	START	EXPIRE	PAYD	FINAL	FINAL	COST	PER MI
2-A-1	STATE LINE-US ROUTE 21	12.490	8-21-37	NELLO L TEER	DURHAM, NC	363,838	8-23-35	9-11-35	9-10-36	375	12-3-36	316,465	25.3	
2-B-1	US ROUTE 21 - AIR BELLOWS GAP	7.164	8-21-37	ALBERT BROS	SALEM, VA	387,815	11-29-35	12-6-35	1-4-36	375	12-30-37		49.8	
2-C-1	AIR BELLOWS GAP - NC ROUTE 10	10.846	10-2-35	PERRY MCGLOTH	KANSAS CITY, MO	361,040	11-29-35	12-7-35	12-16-37	375	11-13-37			
2-D-1	NC ROUTE 10 - HORSE GAP	12.209	11-12-35	NELLO L TEER	DURHAM, NC	290,055	12-14-35	3-5-36	10-15-37	400	12-30-37			
2-E-1	HORSE GAP - BENGE	8.804	8-25-35	NELLO L TEER	DURHAM, NC	210,804	2-1-36	3-6-36	9-18-37	375	10-6-37	218,244	32.10	
2-E-2	BENGE - DEEP GAP	8.118	12-23-35	C A BAGLAND	LEWISBURG, NC	246,813	3-7-34	3-10-36	12-21-37	400	12-20-37			
2-A-2	9 BRIDGES	BRIDGES	1-14-34	SIMONS - MAYBANT	CHARLESTON, SC	156,550	3-24-36	4-2-36	4-29-37	300	4-21-37	157,288		
2-B-2	3 BRIDGES	BRIDGES	1-5-34	J M FRANCESCA & CO	FAYETTEVILLE, NC	31,456	5-1-36	5-13-36	11-24-36	180	11-21-36	31,456		
2-M-2	DUCK CREEK GAP - BIG LAUREL MT	3.422		ASHVILLE CONTRACTING CO	ASHVILLE, NC	36,900	6-19-36	7-4-36	5-3-38	450				
2-N-1	BIG LAUREL MT - TOE RIVER GAP	7.158	5-5-36	KENTUCKY-VIRGINIA STORE CO	MIDDLEBURY, KY	585,638	9-7-36	9-24-36	7-5-38	500				
2-A-3	VIADUCT OVER BIG PINE CREEK	BRIDGE	9-16-36	J M FRANCESCA & CO	FAYETTEVILLE, NC	45,348	10-23-36	11-2-36	3-30-37	210	6-3-37	45,386		
2-P-2	DEE TREE GAP - BULL GAP	GRADING	7.781	M E GILLIOZ	MOHETT, MO	656,598	11-25-36	12-4-36	9-25-38	500				
2-D-2	VIADUCT OVER LAUREL CREEK	BRIDGE	11-36	SIMONS - MAYBANT	CHARLESTON, SC	154,481	1-1-37	1-16-37	5-19-38	360	3-14-38			
2-M-3	VIADUCT	BRIDGE	10-7-37	ASHVILLE CONTRACTING CO	ASHVILLE, NC	18,958	12-2-37	12-11-37	8-18-38	200				
2-J-1	DEACON HEIGHTS - LINVILLE FALLS P.O.	GRADING	12.574	NELLO L TEER	DURHAM, NC	393,332	1-26-38	3-23-38	5-21-39	425				
2-K-1	LINVILLE FALLS RD - MCKINNEY GAP	BRIDGE	9.967	CHANDLER BROS	VIRGINIA, VA	478,572	2-4-38	3-23-38	6-15-39	450				
2-L-1	BITUMINOUS SURFACING ABCDE	SURFACING	58.121	R B TYLER	LOUISVILLE, KY	179,061								
2-L-1	MCKINNEY GAP GOODCH GAP	GRADING	8.910	NELLO L TEER	DURHAM, NC	307,843								
2-D-3	OVERPASS NC ROUTE 10	BRIDGE	11-13-37	C Y THOMASON CONST CO	GREENWOOD, SC	62,147	2-15-38	3-23-38	1-16-39	300				
2-D-4	OVERPASS NC ROUTE 16	BRIDGE	1-9-38	FEDERATION CONST CO	MYRTLE BEACH, SC	24,079	3-3-38	4-5-38	10-21-38	200				
2-B-3	OVERPASS US ROUTE 21	BRIDGE		FEDERATION CONST CO	MYRTLE BEACH, SC	31,203	3-3-38	4-5-38	12-10-38	250				
2-A-1	JARMANS GAP - ROCK FISH GAP	GRADING	8.496	RALPH E MILLS	FRANKFORT, KY	322,845	12-14-35	2-25-36	6-27-37	375	6-16-37	791,174	39.18	
2-P-1	ADNEY GAP - PINE SPUR GAP	BRIDGE	8.271	E W GRANNIS	FAYETTEVILLE, NC	219,915	12-14-35	2-28-36	3-6-37	375	12-19-36	202,510	24.4	
2-Q-1	PINE SPUR GAP - SMART	BRIDGE	11.027	T M STRIDER	NASHVILLE, TENN	204,375	12-14-35	3-6-36	3-16-37	375	1-6-37	221,681	20.06	
2-R-1	SMART - TUGGLE GAP	BRIDGE	9.181	N W TUCK & SON	VIRGINIA, VA	215,315	12-14-35	3-6-36	6-17-37	375	6-1-37	217,473	22.2	
2-S-1	TUGGLE GAP - ROCK CASTLE GAP	BRIDGE	9.045	J LEE & PAVILBIO	DALLAS, TEXAS	234,476	12-14-35	3-10-36	9-17-37	375	11-10-37			
2-T-1	ROCK CASTLE GAP - PINNACLES OF DAN	BRIDGE	9.232	C A BAGLAND	LEWISBURG, NC	215,587	12-14-35	3-22-36	9-21-37	375	10-13-37	218,621	23.6	
2-T-2	4 BRIDGES	BRIDGES	5-21-38	F M ARTHUR	SOUTH BOSTON, VA	55,636	7-11-36	8-2-36	6-15-37	270	6-3-37	35,790		
2-R-2	3 BRIDGES	BRIDGES	6-24-38	CORDE & HOMEWOOD	CHAPEL HILL, NC	27,880	8-8-36	8-14-36	3-14-37	225	12-18-36	24,823		
2-Q-3	ROCK PAVED GUTTER	GUTTER		J M FRANCESCA	FAYETTEVILLE, NC	29,808	8-21-37	9-4-37	12-12-37	100	5-23-38			
2-S-2	BITUMINOUS SURFACING PQRS	SURFACING	41.016	SOUTHERN ASPHALT CO	RICHMOND, VA	151,634	3-29-38	4-6-38	10-2-38	180				
2-T-4	VIADUCT ROUND MEADOW CREEK	BRIDGE	1-29-38	C Y THOMASON CO	GREENWOOD, SC	114,081	3-29-38	4-6-38	1-30-39	300				
2-T-5	OVERPASS US ROUTE 58	BRIDGE	3-28-38	C Y THOMASON CO	GREENWOOD, SC	22,610								
2-U-1	PINNACLES OF DAN - VOLUNTEER GAP	GRADING	9.881	CHANDLER BROS	VIRGINIA, VA	282,055								
2-A-2	BITUMINOUS SURFACING 1A	SURFACING	8.496	CORSON & GRUMAN	WASHINGTON, DC	60,276								

ally the four-lane portion would be integrated into a beltway system around the city, open to all kinds of through traffic. Abbott declared such a proposition as out “of character, unnecessary as a practical matter, and tremendously costly.” His successor was bolder in his condemnation and flatly called the proposition, “Stupid!”

In similar manner, the Bureau proposed that a section of the Parkway near Deep Gap, N.C., at Mile Post 281, be merged with United States Highway 421 for a few miles. The National Park Service again vigorously objected that such a mixing of commercial and recreational traffic was out of character, infeasible, and totally contrary to federal parkway philosophy. The influence of the Chief of Design and the Director of the National Park Service were sufficient, eventually, to sustain Abbott's views and to prohibit integration of Parkway and commercial traffic. The compromise can be seen today, as Parkway and Highway 421 traffic run a brief, but parallel course.

In the meanwhile, all the planning activities were running their normal course, including reconnaissance—the spying out of the land with an architect's sense of aesthetics, direction, variety, and culture. An early report by H.E. van Gelder, reconnoitering the Virginia countryside, portrays the criteria which guided him in determining the Parkway's location: “It is difficult for the Landscape Architect to share the Engineer's paramount interest in easy grades. For a purely scenic drive-way, in my opinion, the controlling features for location would come in this order:

1. To reach the points of greatest beauty—which no doubt are the open, level spaces on the tops of the ridges, with their wonderful views, invigorating atmosphere and great recreational values.
2. Good alignment—which is generally more easily obtained by rising to higher elevations, above the gullies.
3. A minimum of defacement of the natural mountainside—which means keeping off the steep slopes.

4. Easy grades—remembering that for modern pleasure cars steep grades have very little objection. Where alignment can be improved by steepening the grade, I would give preference to the alignment.”

His landscape architect schooling came through vividly in his summary statement: “In general, when locating the road, more consideration should be given to the possibilities of fitting it into the landscape with a minimum of big cuts and fills because on a road built for scenic beauty, if engineering requirements should demand a complete defacement of the countryside, enjoyment of the drive would be much impaired.”

Abbott's advice to his staff emphasized that “**variety is the spice of the Parkway**,” and urged that the basic reason for the Parkway's existence was to please by revealing the charm and interest of the native American countryside. Many years later, while reminiscing about that period, he declared, “We and the engineers together just drilled and drilled, all of us, on the business of following a mountain stream for awhile, then climbing upon the slope of a hill pasture, then dipping down into the open bottom lands and back into the woodlands.”

Van Gelder evidently listened well. His reconnaissance reports are replete with recommendations calculated to fulfill Abbott's desires. Sometimes his proposed center line was on the spine of the ridge with a “great view of the Shenandoah Valley,” or through some open meadows—“a fine high spot.” On the negative side, he counseled avoidance of a “rather shabby group of little farms.” And, conscious of the need for cultural interpretation, he once proposed that the acreage he was surveying be acquired to interpret the story of Appalachian logging operations. Spotting a denuded and eroded farm he suggested it be acquired and reclaimed for nature. His thoughtful analysis resulted in recommendations of this kind: “I would like to see the line even higher up on the hill. Views are rather obstructed by woods on the lower line,” or “From here south for nearly three miles, the ridge is all clear, rocky meadows. Sweeping views in both directions everywhere.”

At the same time, in North Carolina, Abbuehl was reporting that “We have some excellent skyline locations with fine views—best in the country. There are some valley sections varying from the swift mountain stream type to the heavy wooded thicket, and the broad, open



Mabry Mill was one of the “must save” features of the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Rocky Knob Gas Station as originally proposed.

fertile cultivated valley.” He confessed that there was also some “very mediocre stuff” but contended that the landscape architects had made the best of what the country offered, assuring Abbott that, “There will be some thrills for the public.” He also verified that his assignment had its headaches: “Five different lines have been flagged, each of which have some objections. Mr. Brownell, location engineer, and I have spent so much time in this sector trying to make something out of it without any success that I don’t think either of us would like anything there now, even if it was good.”

Breath-taking views and prime locations were not the only concerns of the landscape architects. The salvation and preservation of such Parkway architectural favorites as Mabry Mill and Brinegar Cabin were promoted by the reports forwarded to headquarters by van Gelder, Abbuehl, and later associates. Their knowing eyes and culturally sensitive minds made possible their supervisor’s desire to “please by revealing the charm and interest of the native American countryside.”

Like a gathering of eagles, the arrival of Abbuehl and van Gelder was soon augmented by others. Among the early staffers were Lynn M. Harris, assistant landscape architect, who transferred from the Shenandoah National Park; George W. Wickstead, junior landscape architect, assigned to drafting development maps; Thomas G. Heaton, junior landscape architect, for work on bridge grading and design; Foster M. Warwick, junior landscape architect, transferred from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; C.R. Alt, junior landscape architect, from Grand Tetons National Park; and Robert F. Elliott, junior landscape architect from the Great Smokies.

Throughout the following months landscape architects kept arriving and were immediately assigned special tasks. For example, in March, 1936, Malcolm A. Bird, assistant landscape architect, was transferred from Gatlinburg and placed in charge of Parkway landscape planting design and field work, and Albert S. Burns, junior landscape architect, reported on July 24, 1936, to take pictures of Parkway activities.

Ralph W. Emerson, assistant landscape architect, came on April 2, 1936, for special work on a new master development plan.

Along with the new staffers came another development which, although not even mentioned in the early months of publicity, quickly became one of the most predominant and most distinctive features of the entire Parkway: the birth of a series of recreational parks scattered through the length of the route. This addition offered so much versatility and beauty that Abbott described them as “beads on a string—the rare gems in the necklace.” He considered them absolutely essential to his objective of planning “and developing a complete tourist facility of unusual scale and character,” comparable to the Westchester county parks, proclaiming that the very nature of the Parkway invited leisurely driving with frequent stops by the vacationer. Hence, he said, it was questionably desirable to meet the vacationer’s needs by setting aside worthwhile areas with facilities for camping, picnicking, hiking, horseback riding, golfing, fishing,

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DIVERSITY

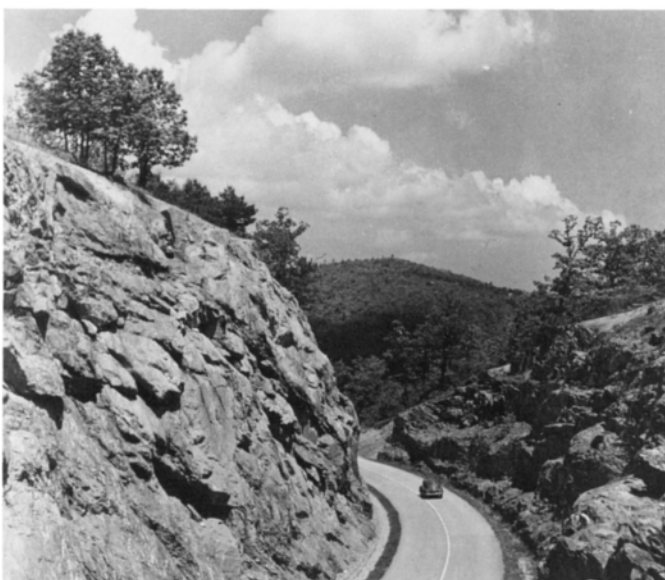
Designed as a 470 mile long road to be driven at leisure, the Blue Ridge Parkway was planned to offer scenic beauty and pleasure. To insure that those who visited it would not become bored with monotonous repetition of the same thing mile upon mile, Stanley Abbott planned diversity into the route the Parkway took and into the man made features of the Park.

For example, the landscape included ...

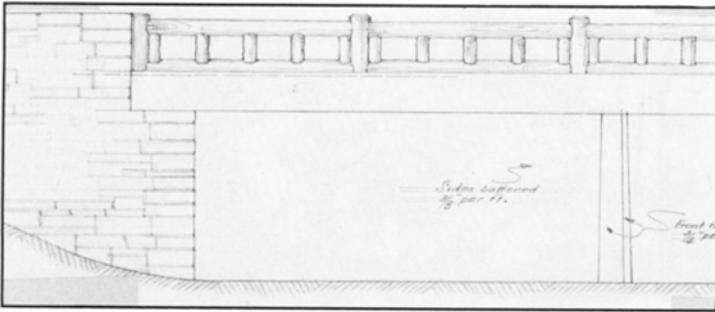
Farmland ...



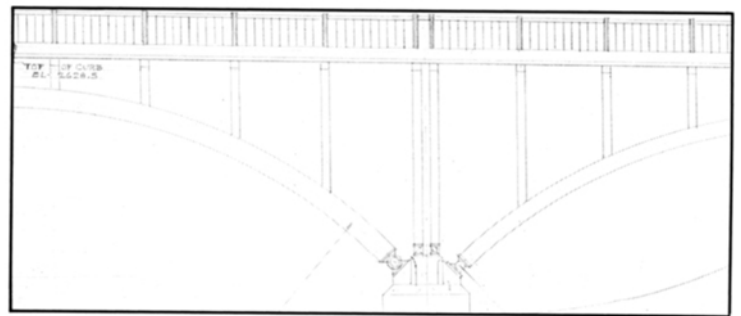
Tree lined corridors ...



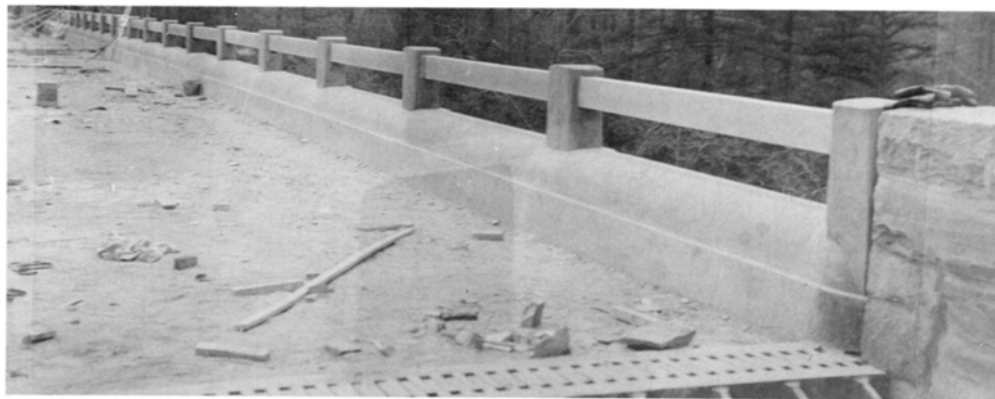
Rock walls ...



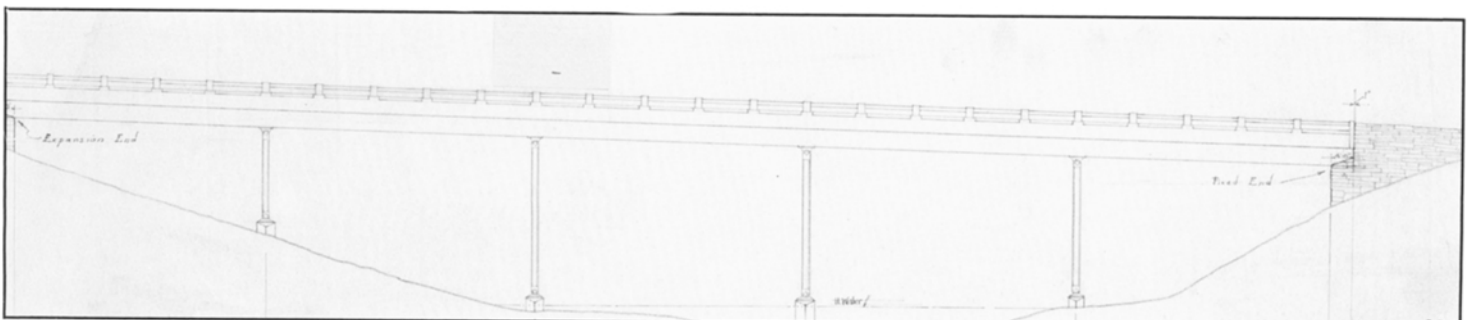
and bridges of wood, concrete ...



and steel.



Variety was planned into everything.



BEFORE

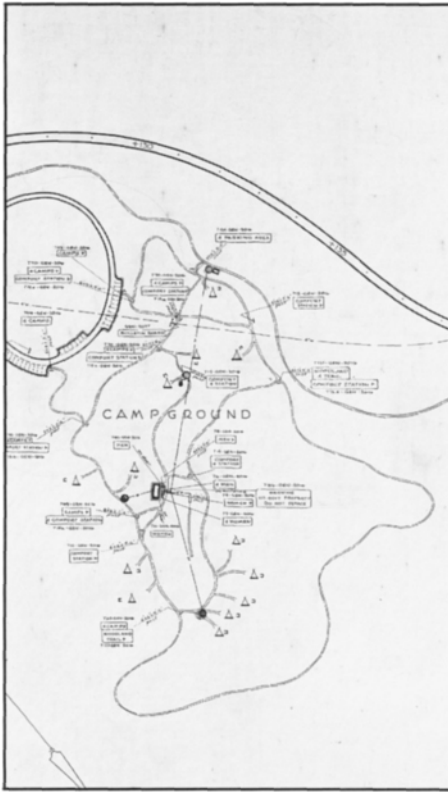
Looking at the Parkway today it is often hard to visualize the task which confronted the architects of this scenic wonder. They contended with overworked, often eroded landscape as well as dense forests where no road had gone before. The photographs on this page are representative of what confronted the first landscape architects.



AFTER

On this page are photographs taken from approximately the same location as those on the opposite page. However, for over forty years, the hand of the builder and the touch of nature, both guided by the park's landscape architects, have worked magic on the land.





The above portion of an early campground sign plan illustrates the detail which landscape architects use to assure a complete appearance.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

and swimming. Carefully planned, these areas would be cardinal elements in rounding out the total usefulness of the Parkway. In addition to providing on-site recreation, he envisioned the satellite parks as a base for side trips to points of interest beyond the Parkway boundaries. He sought the inclusion of amenities including lodges, campgrounds, camp stores, and motor vehicle services, at strategic locations along the route.

By October 1, 1934, the idea had prompted special studies and proposals which climaxed December 15, 1934, in a concise report and master plan by Abbott, integrating the parks into the Parkway proper. The report and master plan were strongly supported by the Chief of Design, the Director of the National Park Service, and the Secretary of the Interior. The areas recommended for park status were divided into "major" and "minor" units. In the former category were Natural Bridge, Peaks of Otter, Pinnacles of Dan and the Bluff. The minor units were Humpback Rocks,

Irish Creek, Pine Spur, Rocky Knob, Cumberland Knob, Gilam Gap, and the Cascades. By 1939 the number of proposed parks had jumped to nineteen. Among the new additions were Lick Log, Smart View, Fisher Peak, Tomkins Knob, Linville Falls, Mount Pisgah, and Richland Balsam. For a variety of political and other reasons, Irish Creek, Gilam Gap, the Pinnacles of Dan, and Natural Bridge were deleted.

The master plan included four supporting components with respect to recreation parks:

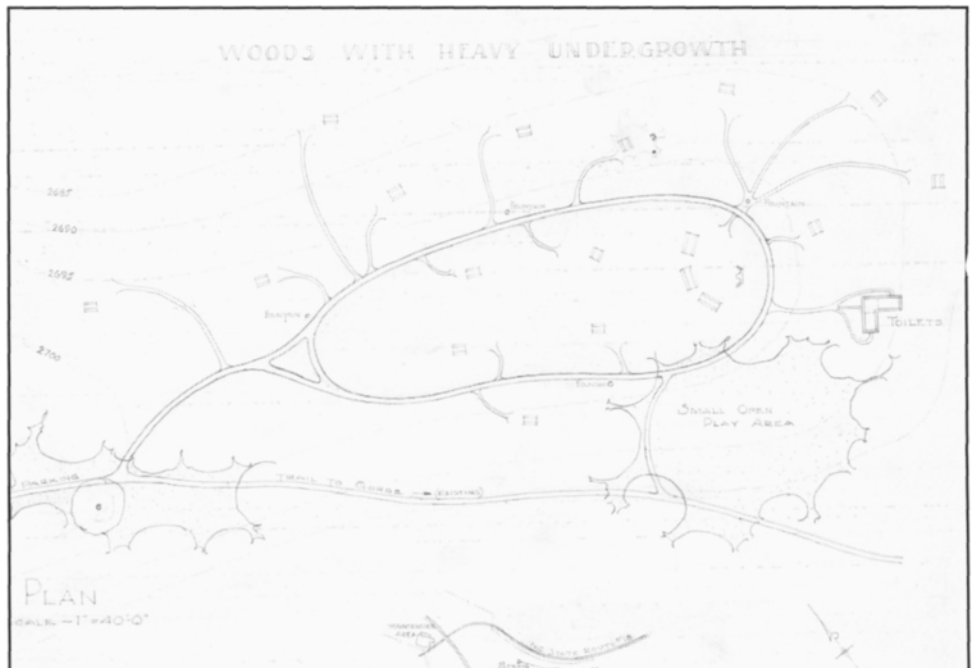
1. Conservation of natural scenery.
2. Facilities for active recreation augmenting the passive enjoyment of the motorway itself.
3. Provision of food, lodging, and motor service in an attractive manner where it is not available.
4. Utility buildings for maintenance and operation of the parks and the Parkway.

Original plans for the Parkway had called only for right-of-way sufficient to construct a motorway. Adding the parks required additional acquisition of thousands of acres of land—land which Virginia and North Carolina were not obligated to buy. Abbott's office made an exten-

sive field study of possible acreage for recreational park purposes, and identified some 90,000 desirable acres, less than half of which was United States Forest Service land. About 50,000 of those acres required other means of acquisition. Again, time and season richly served the Parkway since one of the New Deal relief programs, the Resettlement Administration, had recently devised a program for purchasing sub-marginal land and recycling it back to nature. Abbott learned of the program, filed required applications, made the right contacts, and in October, 1935, received an initial grant of \$103,000 for acquisition and development of park projects in Virginia and \$81,000 for those in North Carolina. These Resettlement Administration funds and sub-marginal land thus provided the Parkway with such popular leisure parks as Rocky Knob and Cumberland Knob. Each park offered a dual role for the Parkway, scenic pleasure coupled with much needed employment.

Park inclusion was determined by some unique feature a site possessed: Humpback Mountain because of the spectacular view it provided of the Virginia valleys; Peaks of Otter for geological features and its fascinating 360 degree panorama; the Bluffs because it was "typical of the high grass pastureland" and also

Notice the short drives to individual picnic tables in the drawing below. More recent plans include few drives, reflecting a change of attitudes and costs.



suitable for recreation such as golfing.

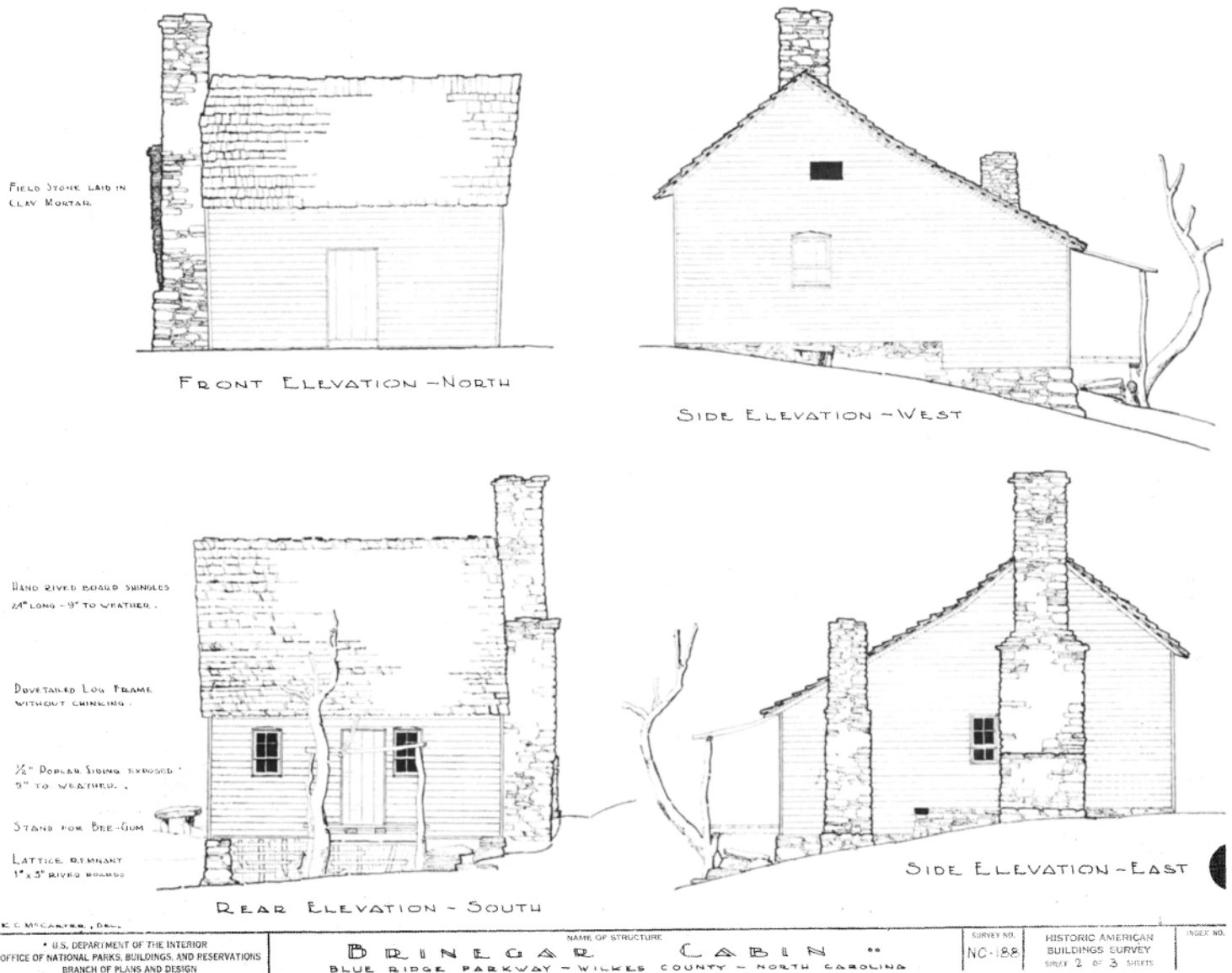
Abbott's master plan for the parks offered a broad spectrum recreational scheme including golf courses, swimming facilities, and horseback riding. Certain National Park Service officials successfully vetoed Abbott on these as out of character with the Parkway's objectives, deeming trails for hiking, picnicking grounds, camping sites, and parking overlooks sufficient to provide for visitor needs. Today's Parkway provides neither golfing, swimming, nor horseback riding facilities.

One of the tasks that Abbott and his staff worked at most diligently, which often met with frustrating delays was the means of providing food, lodging, and visitor services at strategic intervals. The remoteness of many of the Parkway areas and the general lack of visitor accommodations along the way had convinced them that it was mandatory to integrate such services into their master plan. This concept was readily approved by the Service, but two problems still arose: securing competent, acceptable concessionaires and the design of concession units which would blend aesthetically with the Parkway.

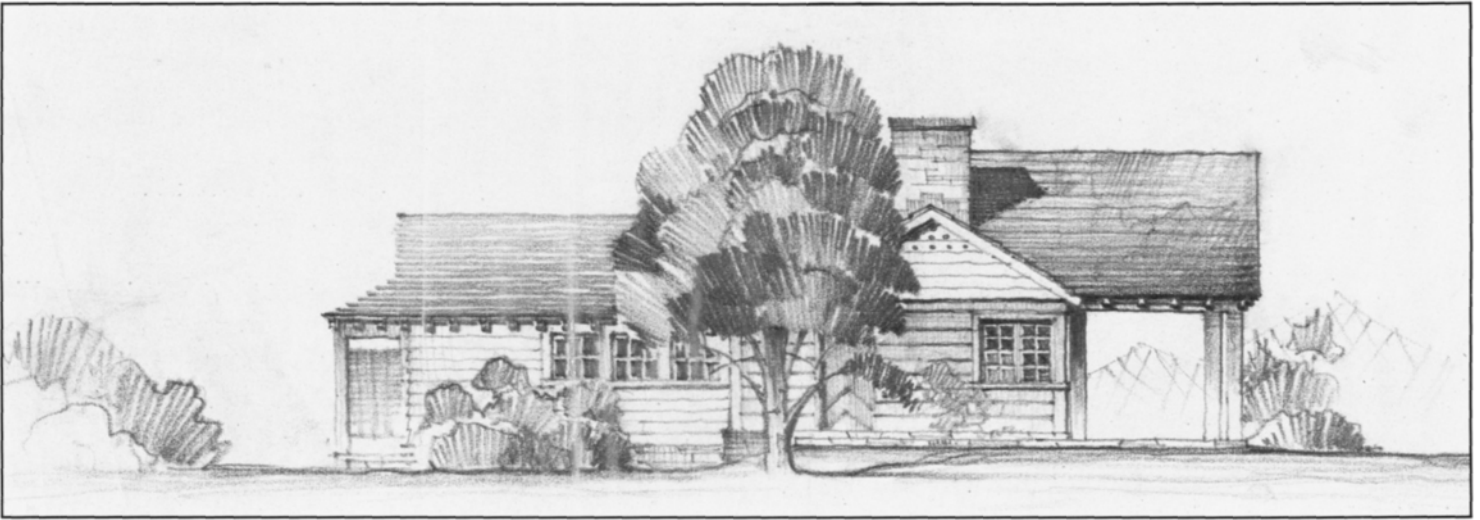
After many months of diligent appeals a first concessionaire was obtained, National Parks Concessions, Inc., and was installed in a building at Cumberland Knob which artfully emulated the better mountain architecture. With its opening the first recreational park was fully operational.

Meanwhile, classic trail shelters and more concession buildings were being designed, including proposed "tea-houses" and lodges. The lodge at Doughton Park is a good example of the landscape architect's touch on the Parkway. It was designed shortly after World War II ended,

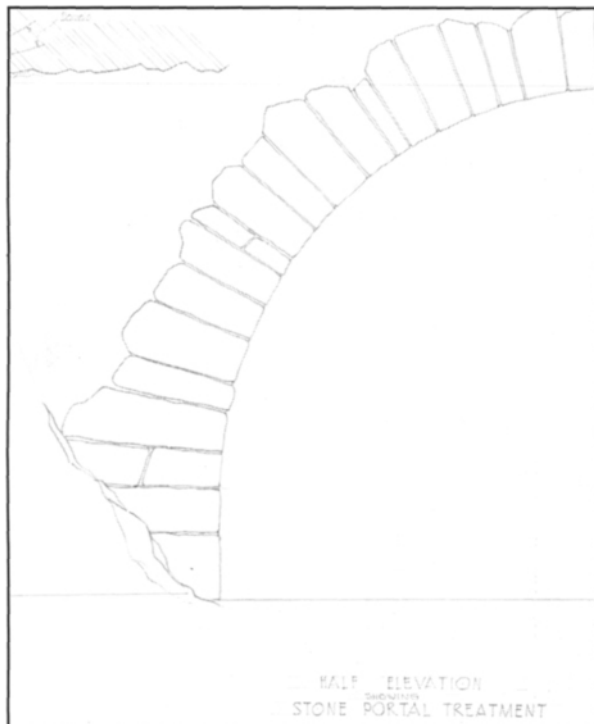
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Part of the work performed by landscape architects included detailed drawings of historic structures to maintain their original appearance.



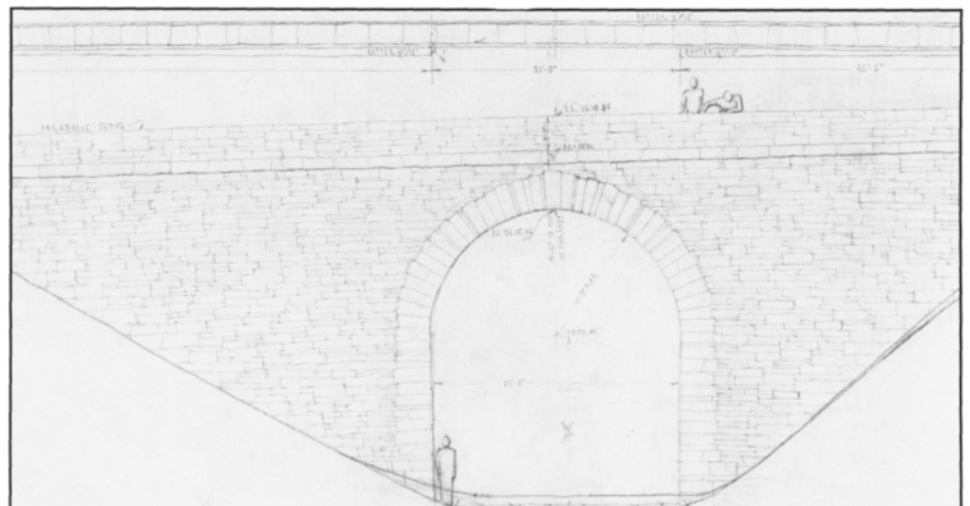
Building concept plan



The work of the landscape architect is truly an art form. The illustration on this and the next three pages support this statement. Ideas must be put on paper for others, such as engineers, to see what the finished work should look like. These ideas on paper are often as worthy of framing as the pen and ink works of an artist.

The land is the landscape architect's canvas. On it he blends objects of nature and man much as an artist brushes color on canvas. Like a sculptor, he carves here, builds up there, plants a tree here and a bush there, and ends up with something of beauty and function.

Drawing to show how a tunnel entrance should look



Drawing for a pedestrian underpass

ART FROM THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



A bridge inserted into the environment without disturbing the scene

Like a sculptor's statue, the man made structures of the Parkway represent the result of a design which began in the mind of an artist, the landscape architect. Unlike the sculptor, however, the architect's ideas are translated into their final form by others. Engineers must design and build the structures and someone must maintain them. All through this process the landscape architect acts as a guide.

Within the boundaries of the Parkway a road was built. Campgrounds and picnic areas were constructed; visitor centers and other structures were placed upon the land. The challenge was to maintain a look so natural that it would be hard to tell where the builder left off and where nature began.



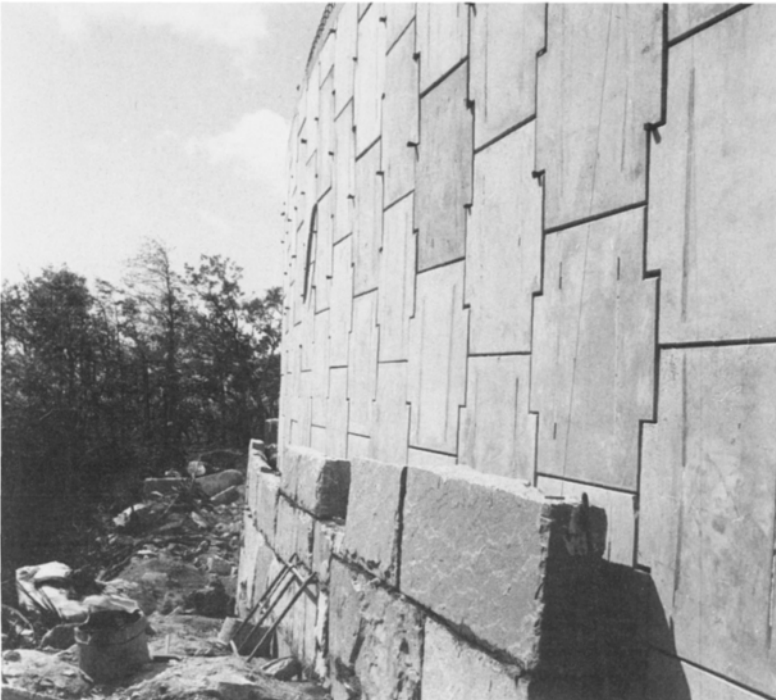
Another bridge built to blend with the natural scene. Notice how the supports begin to blend into the trees.



Log guard rails blend the road along Rocky Knob Picnic Area with the land so well that it is hard to see unless you're on it.



Engineers placed the Linn Cove Viaduct so well that much of the natural setting passed under it.



From the Parkway's beginning until its completion, bridges have been faced with stone to maintain a more natural beauty, with few exceptions.

Masonry in early years was used in a manner that would allow the visitor on foot to see its beauty blending into the land.

At Buck Creek Gap overpass, near Crabtree Meadows, North Carolina, the road appears to underline the scenic beauty, then point to more.

Models were created in the early years to show how construction would look when finished. This model of a stone culvert demonstrates how completely landscape architects planned for a scenic roadway.



Even roadside gutters were works of art. Many of these gutters may still be seen along the middle sections of the Parkway. (above left)

Signs have been shaped into things of beauty by the landscape architect. (above right)

Man's historic effect on the beauty of this scenic road was artfully worked into the completed plan.



and according to one architect's opinion, "The original design looked exactly like a World War II barracks." Luckily, that design was replaced by one that provided the present day unit which blends so attractively with its surroundings.

Simultaneously, the Bureau of Public Roads was making a contribution which greatly expedited the work of its sister agency landscape architects and all others involved in Parkway projects. To improve precision and coordination of planning, design, and administration, the entire Parkway was divided into two sections. The Virginia section was labeled "Section 1" and the North Carolina portion "Section 2," after which each section was divided into alphabetical subsections. To prevent typographical errors, the labels "1-I" and "1-O" were not used, nor were "2-I" or "2-O." The alphabet was threaded by moving southward so that "Section 1-A" linked the Shenandoah National Park to the Parkway whereas "Section 2-Z" linked the Parkway with

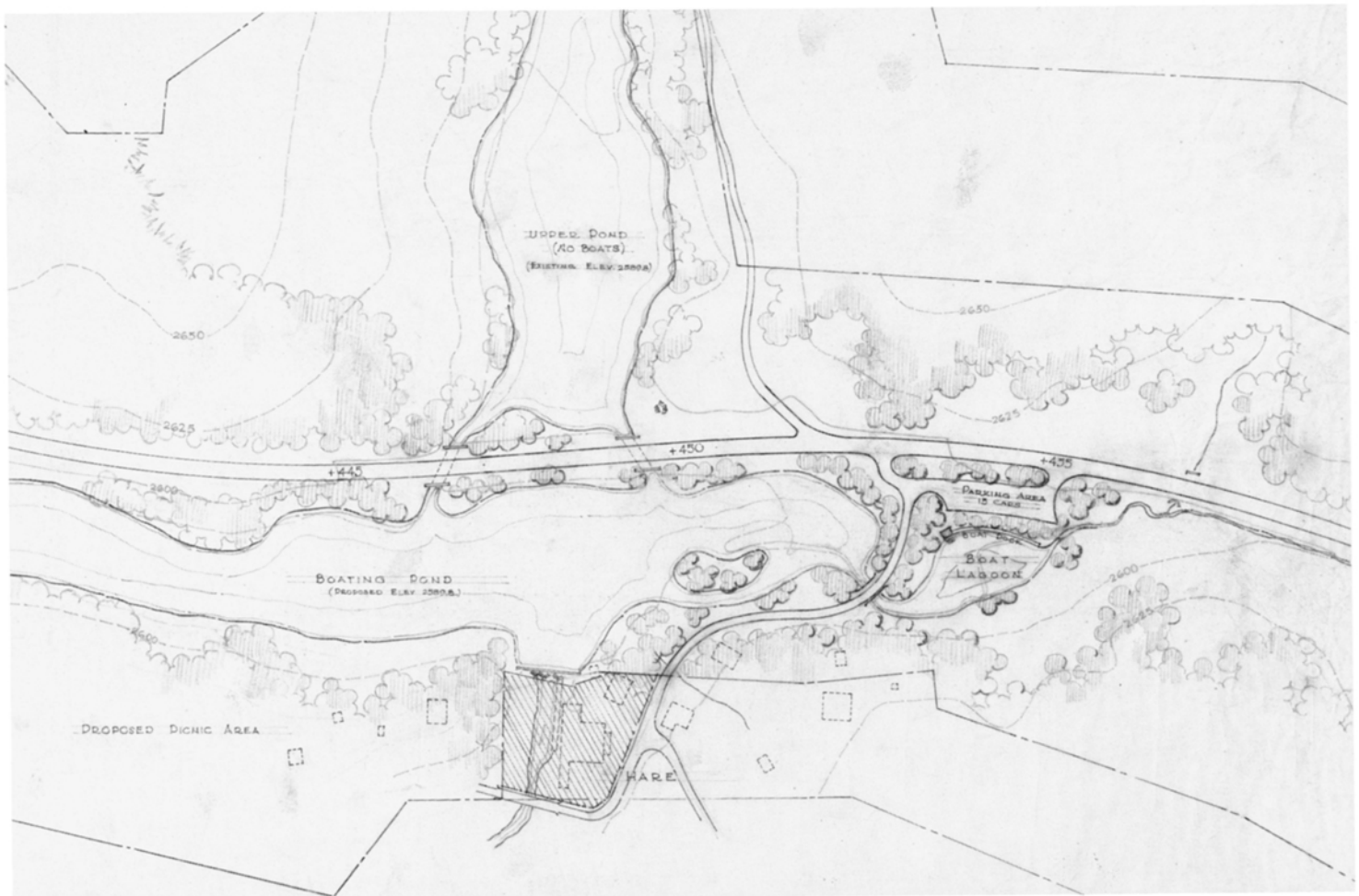
the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This simple but effective mechanism became an invaluable planning and maintenance tool, uniquely distinct to the Parkway.

Two innovations, the mile post markers and the logo design, added charm and utility for future Parkway travelers. Mile post markers, an ancient idea reapplied, similar to those installed centuries ago by the Romans, and recently by modern railroads, were prescribed and gradually put in place throughout the Parkway. Mile "0" began at the junction with the Shenandoah National Park and Mile "469" marked the merger with Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These markers proved invaluable, not only to the traveler, but to the park ranger and park administrator.

The second innovation was the design of a simple but captivating logo to vividly represent the Parkway. Abbott, Abbuehl, Lynn Harris, and others discussed various approaches and numerous designs. The climax

of their brainstorming was a combination of mountain peaks, an open sky, a tall wind-swept white pine, and a swath of the motor-road—all enclosed in a circle. Later, the words "**Blue Ridge Parkway**" were added around the rim of the circle. Thus the currently familiar logo became a vital part of the Parkway story.

Another concept, which began with little fanfare but blossomed into a most significant Parkway entity, was "**Scenic Easement**," the landscape architect's device for controlling the visual boundaries of the Parkway without owning them. From the very beginning anxiety and concern centered around the small right-of-way, at first 200 feet and later 800 feet, affording an inadequate shelter belt. To fortify that vital strip, the scenic easement program was created, whereby, in the land acquisition process, the State made arrangements with the land owner. In return for a one-time financial consideration, said landowners agreed to perpetual restrictions upon the use of their land. Virginia's



Land use maps were used to plan or record much of the Parkway's route.

Scenic Easement Act, March 12, 1936, clearly sets forth those restrictions:

- “The term *scenic easement* shall mean the easement or right of the Commonwealth of Virginia or of its assigns, the United States of America (in cases where said easement is assigned or conveyed to the United States), to restrict the use of any and all lands covered by or subject to said easement so that the owner or owners of said land or any part thereof, or their assigns shall not have the privilege or right:
 - (1) to erect or authorize the erection thereon of any buildings, pole, pole line or other structure;
 - (2) to construct thereon any private drive or road;
 - (3) to require the Commonwealth of Virginia or its assigns to construct any access road or drive thereon;
 - (4) to remove from or break, cut, injure, or destroy on said land any trees or plants or shrubbery;
 - (5) to place thereon any dumps of ashes, trash, sawdust, or any unsightly or offensive material;
 - (6) to place or display thereon any sign, billboard, or advertisement.”



An early entry sign depicting the original Parkway logo.

That any alert landowner would accept such flagrant restrictions upon his possessions speaks volumes about the time and season of that economically depressed era. The logic used by Abbott and the National Park Service authorities was maintenance of the rural scene—the “managed American countryside.” As he explained to the local population in his popular *Blue Ridge Parkway News*: “The general idea behind the scenic easement is simple enough. It allows the farmer to use the land for farming and prevents his using it for other business. The reason behind it from our point of view is that we want the farms as part of the picture and we do not want factories or hotdog stands or billboards. It means that the land has been earmarked for farm use. This is like town zoning, which guarantees to a man who has just built a house that a factory will not be built on the next lot.”

This explanation may have sufficed for the poverty-stricken generation of land-owners Abbott was talking with, but their heirs and assigns who later purchased lands with scenic easement riders have occasionally been shocked and extremely exasperated to discover how binding the scenic easement restrictions became. In the meanwhile, as designed, the rural picture has been maintained.



Even single trees warranted the attention of the landscape architect.

A TIME TO PROPOSE AND A TIME TO REJECT

While these things were evolving, other events were determining the actual location of the Parkway. Among the areas which Abbott wished included in his recreational parks was the geological phenomenon known as Natural Bridge, Virginia. Seeking to provide variety and unique scenic rewards for the traveling public, he proposed that the Parkway route deviate from the Blue Ridge proper at Tye River Gap, veer northward and west to include the Natural Bridge, and then return to the Blue Ridge about five miles west of the Peaks of Otter. Abbott characterized the Bridge as “a scenic reservation at which the traveler would stop for observation,” providing a type of recreation found nowhere else on the Parkway. He also proposed acquisition of about five hundred acres, including the Bridge and its allied tourist facilities. All of it was to be converted into a “public reservation” with upgraded food, lodging, swimming, and golfing accommodations—very similar to what was contained in the Westchester County system. The proposal not only offered relief from continuous mountain driving but also afforded a most unique “watering place” experience. Nevertheless, the fate of Abbott’s recommendation was recorded in one sentence in his first annual report: “Senator Glass of Virginia protested the deviation from the crest line by way of

the Peaks of Otter and accordingly the Secretary of the Interior announced on July 25, 1935, that the original mountain location would be followed."

In that same year, Abbott, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Public Roads, and the State of North Carolina attempted to establish the Parkway location through the Cherokee Indian reservation. At issue were location, width of right-of-way, scenic easement, and access rights, especially in the village of Cherokee, a major tourist destination. The Indians wished to grant only a narrow right-of-way, on a location of their choosing, from Soco Gap through Cherokee, flatly rejecting scenic easement. Abbott and the Service, on the other hand, recommended that the Parkway run through the village on a separate roadbed, insulated from regular traffic, with no frontage privileges. They also took the position that if the Indians remained adamant the Parkway should be terminated at Soco Gap. Ensuing conferences repeatedly ended in stalemates. Seeking an alternative, Abbott proposed that the Parkway run from Balsam Gap to Sylva, then down the Tuckaseegee River and enter Cherokee via the Oconoluftee River. Months of delicate and frustrating negotiations finally ended with the State of North Carolina working out acquisitions which, on a completely new route, by-passed the village of Cherokee and connected the Parkway with the Smokies at Ravensford. Again Abbott and the landscape architects were bested by political considerations.

A TIME TO INFORM AND A TIME TO SHARE

Closely tied in with the preceding events was another innovation, something traditional; yet very new. The National Park Service routinely made it a policy to keep the public informed of its work. Thus the Parkway's Resident Landscape Architect inherited an additional job, that of public information officer. This he partially accomplished via the traditional media of press and conferences. But none of these, in his opinion, reached the audience whose support he yearned for—the mountain neighbors of the Parkway. To get their attention, understand-

ing, and support, he instituted the *Blue Ridge Parkway Newsletter*, a small mimeographed sheet. It was hand-delivered to country stores and similar public gathering spots along the Parkway and quickly proved popular.

In the first issue, November, 1937, Abbott established a sincere, cordial tone which remained through the life of the *News*: "We wish it were possible to have a long talk over the fence with each one of you in the manner of all good neighbors. With 500 miles to cover you can readily see that it is a real task and it may be some time before we can shake hands with all of you. We still have that in mind, but, meanwhile, we have hit upon the idea of this paper."

Like the good mentor that he was, he used issue after issue to inform his neighbors about Parkway matters and to share his philosophy and that of the Service. Topics included the following:

- **"Woodlands along the Parkway,"** featuring the scenic value of trees and urging owners to manage them wisely both for their benefit and that of the thousands of visitors who were soon coming;

- **"What is a Parkway?,"** giving readers a layman's definition of "parkway" and stressing the need to safeguard the natural beauty of the region so that both local residents and their visitors could perpetually enjoy that beauty;
- **"Scenic Easements: Your Rights and Ours,"** in which, speaking to answer the farmer who said, "I own the land and I don't," Abbott admitted that "he is right but he makes it sound worse than need be." Then came the previously quoted explanation of the reasoning behind the scenic easement program, with an emphasis upon the benefits accruing to both parties;
- **"For the Enjoyment of All,"** a charming essay rebutting the rumor that the Parkway was a "rich man's road" and that the local people would not be welcome to use it. Greatly perturbed, Abbott declared, "Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Blue Ridge Parkway will be opened for the use and enjoyment of all the Nation alike, whether they live within a stone's throw of the road itself or whether they come from the far corners of the United States."



Triple arch bridge over the Linville River, North Carolina.

Other commentaries, over a five year period, dealt with such topics as soil conservation, fire control, wild life habitat, and the leasing program. These warm-hearted, friendly bits of news, information, and philosophy served as strong mortar to bond the interests of the Parkway with those of its neighbors and helped the Parkway become a five hundred mile long community.

A TIME TO GATHER STONES TOGETHER

Closely integrated with all other activities were the daily tasks of planning and designing for every undertaking. Therein lay the matrix for every bridge, sign, guard rail, picnic table, trail, parking overlook, building—everything that the Service was to place on the Parkway. Each item required numerous drafts, revisions, reviews, and approvals, as well as close supervision during construction. The landscape architect's office daily accumulated new drafts and blueprints, each coded and numbered, keyed into Service standards. To every mile of the route the healing, rehabilitating, and beautifying touch of the landscape architect was applied. Out of that touch would come recreational, social, and economic changes sufficient to alter the entire mountain region through which it ran.

The dominant theme in all of this was Abbott's guiding star: "Marry beauty to utility." Everything had to blend, to mold together to merge with the existing features to fulfill the prescribed objective of establishing a "museum of managed countryside."

The Linville River bridge amply illustrates the concept. It was designed not simply to bridge a river but to become part of the total recreational program, artfully demonstrating the landscape architect's use of native stone to enhance the engineer's utilitarian bridge. Here again, the influence of the Westchester Park system is evident: present all along the Parkway are concrete bridges, bridge abutments, tunnel portals, and over-passes cleverly hidden by an outer-facing of native, rough-cut stones, a tribute not only to the Westchester model but to the fact that the Chief of De-



Man made dam and falls at Otter Creek, Virginia.

sign and Chief Architect, Thomas C. Vint, firmly believed that nude concrete was lacking in aesthetics.

This vital sense of aesthetics had a most interesting accompaniment in the Parkway's "gathering of stones." The landscape architects studied the use native mountaineers had made of local stone, as in their chimneys, and attempted to emulate that use, even specifying that any stone used would have to come from within a certain distance of the road. Ironically, when it came time to convert that native stone into the masonry requirements of the architect, it was necessary to seek out Spanish and Italian immigrant stone masons, like one Joe Troitino, to do the work.

One of the most unusual stone masonry achievements on the entire project had to do with Abbott's fascination with water as a landscape medium. Recalling the use the Westchester Parks had made of water resources, he deliberately routed the road alongside streams and was saddened by the lack of natural lakes along the way. One of the landscaping remedies for that lack is visible in the dam which forms Otter Creek Lake. The masonry work is so cleverly contrived that, to the casual eye, the water cascading over the dam seems to flow over Nature's own stones.

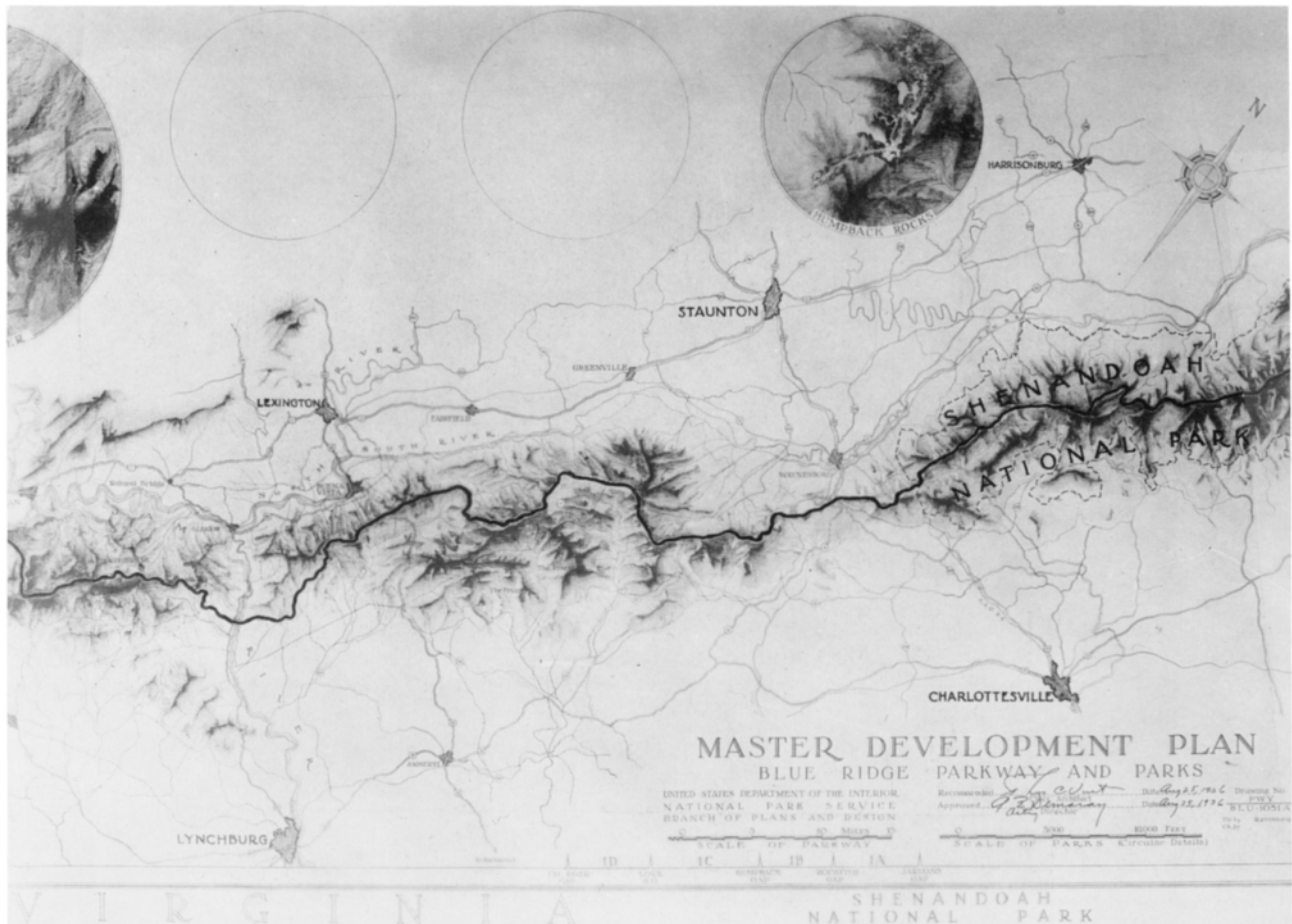
In gathering together stones, and in practicing the landscape architect's art, it is a remarkable characteristic of the Parkway that "blending" causes many very attractive architectural attraction features to quietly

slip by, unnoticed and, therefore, unappreciated. In fact, the "Parkway Underground," the sub-surface features, offer an unheralded architectural attraction worthy of serious attention. For example, to the passing motorist the Linville River bridge appears as simply a nice, utilitarian stream-crosser. But to the lucky hiker and fishermen who pass under it there is displayed a fabulous three arch span reminiscent of those of Rome. The same treat for the keen eye is present at the bridges spanning the James River, the Roanoke River, the Round Meadow, and Goshen Creek, where beauty and utility are merged.

A TIME TO PLANT AND A TIME TO SOW

Out of the PLUMS land use study mentioned earlier came a pioneering development which is still providing the rural picture so desired by the landscape architects. This was the land leasing program, whereby the Service, once it had rehabilitated land and restored its fertility, leased portions of it to local farmers who put it to traditional agricultural use. Abbott set forth two values he saw in the program: "(1) It will maintain the open character of the country where it is desirable without any considerable maintenance cost to the Federal Government and, (2) It will build up the friendly feeling of the farmer toward the Parkway." A most valuable and delightful bonus came out of the leasing program. It became a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



By planning... Section from early master plan



On-site supervision... Landscape architects carried their work to the field. Here one is seen marking trees to be kept.



Special projects... The Mission 66 program rejuvenated the Parkway program after World War II.

HOW IT WAS ACCOMPLISHED

Labor programs... The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) is only the latest of many work projects which helped build the Parkway.



Hand labor... The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided much of the hand labor necessary to build the early portions of the Parkway.

Mule power... Virginia Emergency Relief labor performed much of their work with mule power. Here they are using a drag pan to build a gutter.





CCC enrollees moved many trees used in landscaping the road.



North Carolina Emergency Relief labor moved many tons of top soil which was saved for landscaping.



WPA workers salvaged sod for later use.

BY USING WHAT WAS THERE



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

conservation “better mousetrap,” with the leased lands becoming demonstration plots in praise of wise land use. Parkway officials helped in every way possible, providing seed, fertilizer, lime, seedlings, and soil conservation advice. Their attitude was shaped by a simple reality, as expressed ably by one of them: “On the Blue Ridge Parkway a narrow right-of-way makes every phase of conservation very difficult, administratively and physically. Fire, water, plant, and animal life, and even people can hardly be regimented along the 500-mile strip of park land. The only solution lies in our ability to make conservationists out of our neighbors by adroit educational schemes.” Hence, by example, the conservation theme was widely broadcast: soil improvement practices required of each lease holder spread from Parkway land to his land, and from there to his neighbors. And when the Service treated hundreds of severely eroded acres and made them productive, it posted a highly visible sign to its neighbors to emulate the practice.

Sam P. Weems, Abbott’s successor as Parkway Superintendent, made a classic statement about the Service’s attitude toward conservation and the local population when he remarked: “Education, still the mightiest weapon of conservation, has, on the Parkway, a strong ally in the noble pride of the mountaineer. . . .” The flowering of that education and the successful modeling of conservation practices today provide the harmonious and eye-pleasing views which greet visitors along the entire route.

Abbott was not disturbed by the urgency of other demands delaying attention to the landscape program, saying, “A program of its type and scale is again a matter of pioneering and for this reason we recognize that the delay has its advantages.” Still, two things puzzled him: methodologies for executing the program, and how to best use the initial funding. He became convinced that labor from the Civilian Conservation Corps would best serve his purpose, and requested that seven camps be assigned to him, eventually receiving five. They, along with other emergency workers, did their share

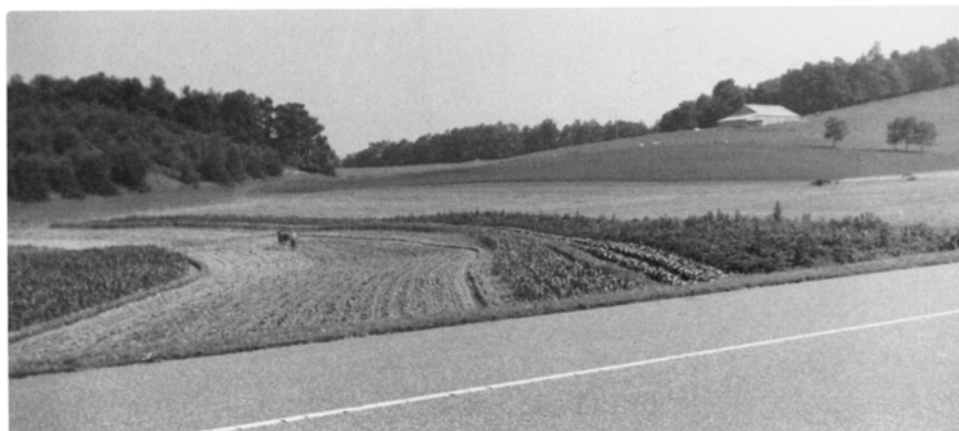
of adding to Parkway beauty. He also decided to use his first funding of \$230,000 to execute the complete landscape plans for a demonstration project on Sections 1-Q and 2-A.

Abbott’s report to the Director of the National Park Service, 1938, glowed with pride of accomplishment: “Thus far in North Carolina eight miles of general clean-up of dead and downed timber and debris has been accomplished on Section 2-A, five miles of which has been completed as to selective cutting and vista clearing. This first work, in many respects is one of the most spectacular parts of the whole program. Comparisons before and after the work show how much of the natural beauty of the woods and fields have formerly been hidden by the debris, the slash, and especially the suckers or stump growth resulting from careless forestry in the past. Beautiful vistas to the distance, glimpses into the woods and specimen laurel, rhododendron and azalea in the background are often revealed by a slight cutting under judicious supervision.” This touch of the landscape architect, “painting with a comet’s tail,” is the artistic source of the 500 miles of Parkway beauty.

When the Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees finally arrived they were assigned landscaping duties. One of their most identifiable accomplishments is still at work—the routed wooden signs scattered the length of the roadway. The landscape division designed them to enhance the visitors’ cultural awareness and to answer the ever-recurring question, “What is that?” Another “CCC” task was “slope

reduction,” flattening slopes which the construction contractor had left too steep to suit the landscape architects. Once flattened those slopes were sodded, seeded, and planted with native materials. Abbott described the program: “The grass seeding and sodding and general landscape planting of 480 miles of Blue Ridge Parkway unquestionably comprises one of the largest programs of its sort ever undertaken in the United States.” He also added a most pertinent observation: “Perhaps the most surprising accomplishment of the landscape program is the practical rather than the artistic effect. Warping and rounding parkway fills and cuts has reduced road hazard by eliminating loose overburden and rock, has stabilized slopes and ditches in the most erosive soils and thereby greatly reduced present and future maintenance.” Again, the work of landscape architects made utilitarian purpose into beautification.

The landscape work was so naturalistically executed that it is difficult to tell today where the landscape architect’s work ends and that of Nature begins. The average Parkway traveler is totally unaware that much of the beauty he is enjoying reflects the Aladdin’s touch of the landscape architect and the labor of hundreds of relief workers. Abbott, deeply conscious of their contribution, paying them tribute when the coming of World War II closed out the relief agencies, said: “While better controlled than usual, the great earth moving machines have left a rough trail across the mountains, a wayside ravelled with many threads to be caught up. It has been in this reknitting, in the healing



Agricultural scene at Adney Gap, Virginia.

over, and finishing that the emergency programs have made of a mountain highway a mountain parkway. Without such a follow up much would be lost in the Parkway's beauty, and much that makes it practical as well."

The Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees were then replaced by several Civilian Public Service camps of Conscientious Objectors, who helped develop Crabtree Meadows and the Peaks of Otter parks. Abbott was not as complimentary about their work. On one occasion, he exhorted them to be conscious of the fact that although they were painting on a small palette they were contributing to a valuable cause—a cause which would bring pleasure to thousands of people in the future. By the time World War II began, the Parkway's landscape development plans were firmly in place and the project was approximately two-thirds complete. When Stanley W. Abbott went off to war in 1943 he and his colleagues had begun "painting the comet's tail," and their aspirations of creating a museum of managed American countryside were becoming a reality. During the war, Parkway construction was placed on hold, since most of its support team departed for war duty. After the war ended, activities supporting project completion were slow to revive, with woefully inadequate funding from Congress. Luckily, a dynamic Service program called Mission 66 came along to arouse new life and new enthusiasm. With it came amphitheaters for interpretive programs, utilitarian visitor centers, lodges, and employee residences. Abbott's yen for the water component was tastefully fulfilled by the construction of a lake named in his honor at the Peaks of Otter. Moreover, Price Lake also came into being as an outstanding example of the landscape architect's skill, with the dam cleverly concealed as a bridge. Another water oriented development was built around the James River canal theme, adding new richness to Abbott's recreational parks.

Considering the snail's pace of construction, it is remarkable that for more than fifty years the continuity of philosophy, planning, and landscape management for the Parkway



Rocky Knob, Virginia, CCC enrollees laboring on Parkway slopes, Milepost 169, 1938.

has flowed from the guardianship, hearts, and minds of only four successive Resident Landscape Architects: Stanley W. Abbott, Edward H. Abbuehl, Arthur H. Beyer, and Robert A. Hope.

Just as remarkable were their never-failing abilities to maintain exceptionally good, professional working relationships with their opposites, the Bureau of Public Roads' engineers, such as William Austin, E.G. Middleton, E.J. Woodrow, F.W. Kron, Charles Kinney, Col. W.I. Lee, James L. Obenschain, Joseph A. Todd, and L.M. "Bud" Darby.

In similar manner, over the seemingly endless years, continual cooperation between the Resident Landscape Architects and the right-of-way engineers for Virginia and North Carolina was diligently promoted. A classic example of that cooperation came to fruition via R. Getty Browning, North Carolina's chief right-of-way engineer, who walked every foot of the North Carolina sections and so unstintingly applied his life to promoting the interests of the Blue Ridge Parkway that the National Park Service recognized his contribution by naming a Parkway peak in his honor, "Browning Knob."

Thus, a common vision, a common goal, and an uncommon dedication of innumerable, talented professionals have made possible "a time to plant and a time to sow," with a resulting unparalleled eye-appealing cultural landscape called the Blue Ridge Parkway.

A TIME TO LIE LIGHTLY ON THE LAND

Little by little, with excruciating delays the Parkway approached completion. The unit to have the distinction of being the "last link" was a fragile, boulder strewn segment around Grandfather Mountain. It had an intricately complicated routing history. The Service and the land owner had widely divergent opinions about how the road should traverse the Grandfather Mountain. Early projections in the 1930's had assumed that the route would absorb the existing Yonahlossee Trail and hence that right-of-way was obtained. Service landscape architects eventually rejected it and proposed a new one above the existing road saying that it was impossible to bring the old road up to National Park standards. Included in the new routing was a tunnel, an environmental protection device. But the land owner vigorously protested that the "high" road and tunnel would be extremely detrimental to the fragile environment. There developed a stalemate, lasting several years, with the Service holding out for its "high" road on the grounds that revamping Yonahlossee Trail to standards matching the rest of the Parkway was impossible. The land owner held out for the "low" road, arguing that Grandfather Mountain was too precious environmentally to endanger with all the blasting which would accompany tunnel construction.

Engineers, landscape architects, and a variety of specialists, political as

well as technical, clambered over the terrain, gesticulating, projecting, and counter-projecting. Finally, after an exhausting day on the site, seeking an answer favorable to the mountain, the owner, and the nation, a Service team leader took a topographic map to his motel room and, with red ink, placed a series of dots on it, crossing the Linn Cove drainage system: "Right there is where it will have to go!" he declared. Out of those little red dots eventually came a solution to the routing problem. A middle route, eliminating the tunnel, received approval by all parties.

Then came a final pioneering accomplishment of the Parkway's history: design the Linn Cove Viaduct, a bridge which could cross the environmentally fragile terrain without wreaking havoc. To meet the challenge, techniques and design methods learned in post-war Alpine Europe were applied. A span of 1,243 feet, consisting of 153 separate pre-cast segments, and utilizing every kind of alignment geometry known to road construction, was built in the form of a double "S," literally from the top down. Using the most sophisticated computer and engineering technology available, this "most complicated segmental bridge ever built" was skillfully laid in place. The delicate environment was remarkably undisturbed, making this unit one of the most outstanding engineering and landscaping accomplishments in the nation's history.

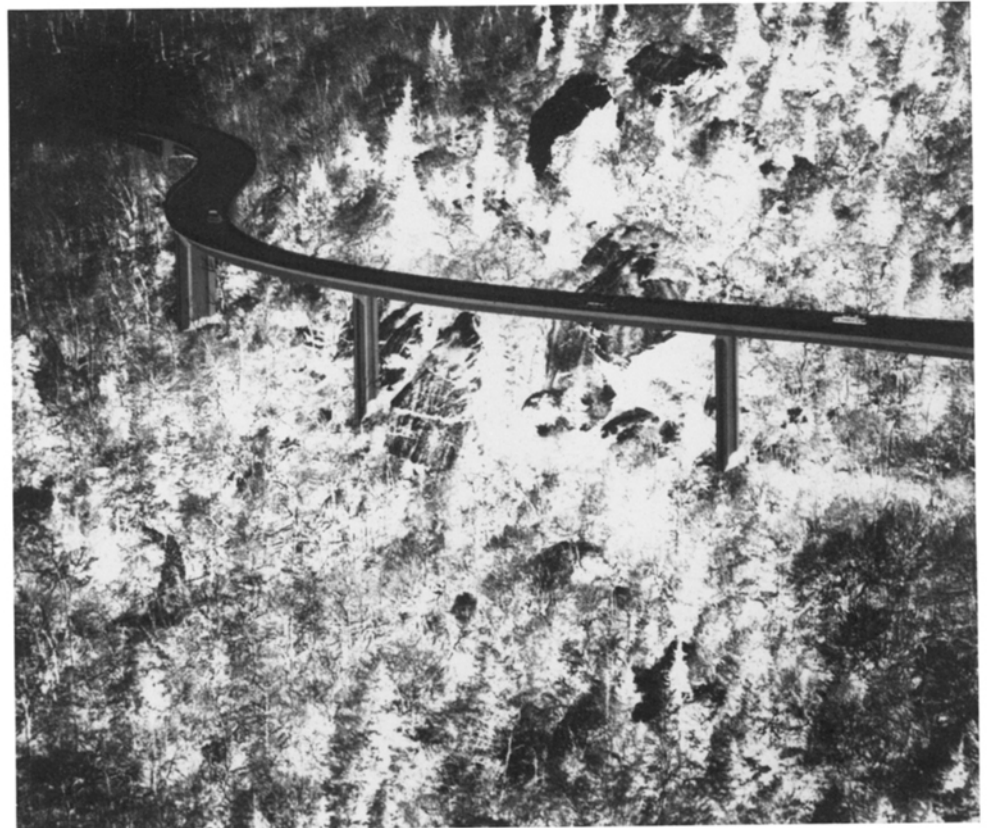
The Linn Cove Viaduct story vividly illustrates the extraordinary stature of the technological changes which have evolved since the first landscape architect and engineer made their pioneer designs in the early 1930's. For example, Stanley W. Abbott and his colleagues labored with the aid of a French curve, a straight edge ruler, a so-called "spline line," a "gooseneck" weight, and a hand manipulated calculating machine. But, almost half a century later, when the landscape architect and engineers had to design the Linn Cove Viaduct within rigid environmental confines, Rex Cocroft, Bridge Engineer, Federal Highways, utilized a vest pocket-sized highly sophisticated computer to plot the curvilinear design which gives the

Linn Cove Viaduct its peculiar uniqueness. Thus, both the vision and the technology have grown, and both the old Grandfather Mountain and the new Linn Cove Viaduct truly lie "lightly on the land."

A TIME TO CELEBRATE

Finally, in an unbelievably long, stretched out construction program, lasting better than half a century, the Parkway received the last touch of the engineer, heard the final groan of the bull-dozer, and felt the concluding peck of the stone mason's hammer. Complete at last, it reflected millions of dollars of taxpayers' money well invested, employment for thousands, recreation for untold numbers, and a pioneering achievement that is a monument to the Great Depression and a celebration of the Great American Countryside. Here, indeed, was an incomparable public works achievement, painted on a "five hundred mile canvas with a comet's tail."

Credit lines for this eye-pleasing accomplishment could fill many pages. Topping the list would be those intrepid, gifted landscape architects who pioneered with such distinction. How richly they had fulfilled the National Park Service creed to conserve, to share, and to pass on to posterity an exquisitely incomparable managed museum of the American countryside! Testimonial of their success is evidenced by all those who flock to enjoy its limitless panoramas, native plants and animals, its visitor centers and campsites, its waterfalls and streams, and its flaming autumn foliage, free from the trucks and commerce of the Interstate highways. Perhaps the greatest tribute that can be offered is the realization that the landscape design was so well-done that most users assume that all is in its natural state, never realizing the monumental accomplishment of those architects and engineers who created this special access for public enjoyment.



The Linn Cove Viaduct on Grandfather Mountain, North Carolina, is a fitting end to the Blue Ridge Parkway construction. It was built to retain as much as possible of a fragile landscape. Its graceful beauty compliments the natural environment and helps protect it for the enjoyment of the passerby.

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY



Stanley W. Abbott
1933-1948



Edward H. Abbuehl
1948-1957



Arthur H. Beyer
1957-1963



Robert A. Hope
1963-present

(Kenneth C. McCarter served as Resident Landscape Architect from January, 1944 to November 1945 while Stanley Abbott was on military furlough.)

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Mr. Robert A. Hope, Resident Landscape Architect, Blue Ridge Parkway, Asheville, N.C.

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DR. HARLEY E. JOLLEY, also known as “Mr. Blue Ridge Parkway,” is a retired distinguished professor of history at Mars Hill College where he taught from 1949 through his retirement in 1991. Dr. Jolley and his wife, Betty, were the backbone of the Mars Hill history department for more than forty years. He volunteered as a ranger and historian for National Park Service on the Blue Ridge Parkway. He was a recipient of North Carolina’s Order of the Long Leaf Pine. He authored many books and articles including, *The Blue Ridge Parkway: The First 50 Years*, *That Magnificent Army of Youth and Peace: The Civilian Conservation Corps in North Carolina, 1933-1942*, and *Along the Blue Ridge Parkway*.